

NOTICE TO OUR READERS

Kuwait Times extends to our readers best wishes for the Kuwait National & Liberation Day holidays! The newspaper will not publish 25-26 February. Our next issue will be published on February 27, 2017.

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'gas capital
of the world'*

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*Happy
National Day & Liberation Day*

Kuwait Times
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Residents in Al-Rawda area celebrate the Kuwaiti National & Liberation Day holidays by decorating the street with lights. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Local Spotlight

NEGATIVE PHENOMENA: WATER GUNS



By Muna Al-Fuzai

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The next two days will mark the 56th National Day and 26th Liberation Day of Kuwait. This event brings back a lot of memories for those who witnessed the period before and after the Iraqi invasion and how the national celebration was a day of joy, pride and accomplishment for everyone. Times have changed now, with much demand for traveling during the short holiday until the so-called celebrations are over on Monday.

Since last week, I have been receiving calls from expat friends planning to travel out of Kuwait in the coming days. Of course they do not want to expose themselves to harm by water guns and foam in the streets in the name of joy during the national holidays.

A friend asked me about the relationship between the use of water or foam sprays and the National Day of Kuwait. I told him there is no connection. But in the absence of real enforcement of law and penalties, anything can happen. We will keep seeing these harmful images every year. Also, when parents take no action

against acts that can harm others, what can you expect?

The world is facing a water crisis and there are people who are dying of thirst. We are a country that relies on desalinated seawater for drinking, so when we disregard a great blessing like water, anything can happen. If the parents are ignorant and careless, why blame the children? It is unfortunate that some people make offensive mistakes as a means of joy.

Municipality Director General Ahmad Al-Manfouhi said in a press statement two days ago that the municipality is decorating streets with Kuwaiti flags for the national occasions and is preparing to maintain cleanliness. This is nice and good, but it does not mean that the phenomenon of water guns has ended.

Since the last few years, water guns have taken over the roads to celebrate instead of foam sprays, and children have turned streets into pools of water. Some roam the streets spraying water on everyone, motorists and pedestrians. This is unacceptable and it is not funny but

We are a country that relies on desalinated seawater for drinking

harmful, especially in this cold.

The director of the municipality said this year it will set a plan to eliminate negative practices during the celebration, pointing out that the law will be applied to all those who disturb the national celebrations, especially street vendors who take advantage of the national holidays by selling foodstuff, fireworks and water guns. This is a good plan and I really hope it will work out. Time will tell. It is necessary to apply the law strictly on these vendors, whether they are roaming or not. And why not extend the ban on baqalas that sell water guns?

It is amazing how we Kuwaitis allow a few people to turn our National Days into travel periods for most expats and many Kuwaitis who don't want anything to do with the mess during the coming days. I have a tip for all those who will remain in Kuwait. If you don't want to get wet in this cold and don't want to take part in these so-called water celebrations, stay at home and stay warm. Happy holidays!

KUWAITI NATIONAL AND LIBERATION DAYS 2017



By Lawrence Silverman, US Ambassador to the State of Kuwait

I warmly congratulate the Government and people of Kuwait on the 56th anniversary of their independence and the 26th anniversary of liberation. The United States is proud to have contributed to the liberation of Kuwait and remains proud today to be a partner in a close, strategic and growing bilateral relationship. We made a commitment to Kuwait's liberation, and we helped make that a reality in 1991. Our commitment to Kuwait's defense demonstrated then continues to the present day.

The United States is continuing to deliver and provide training for the capabilities that enable Kuwait's Armed Forces to deter as well as to defend against those that would seek to do harm to the nation. In the recent telephone call between President Trump and His Highness, the Amir, the US President reaffirmed this strong defense partnership.

I believe the U.S. partnership with Kuwait is as mutually beneficial to our peoples now as it was back in 1990-91 - in many ways. The Strategic Dialogue that the United States and Kuwait inaugurated last October in Washington will help us enhance the already close defense, economic, educational and cultural ties between our two nations. The United States and Kuwait agree that our partnership should produce practical results for our citizens.

Our leaders have also agreed on the importance of strengthening bilateral economic and education cooperation, building on the progress achieved at the Strategic Dialogue. Trade and investment between our two countries are growing; we hope that will spur both growth and innovation. More than 15,500 Kuwaiti students are studying in America. Each day those students bring their own unique set of experiences to our classrooms, lecture halls, and college student groups - as their parents and grandparents did earlier. Our policy of welcoming these students to our country has not changed. These students are bringing home what they learned in America to help forge Kuwait's future.

I believe in the future of close U.S - Kuwaiti cooperation not only in education, but in the fields of science and healthcare as well. Even as America's hospitals continue to

provide excellent care to Kuwaiti patients, U.S. health institutions provide support and training as Kuwait expands its own healthcare infrastructure.

Since arriving here late last September, I have been inspired by the enduring spirit and determination of Kuwaitis who draw from their history to take on a leadership role in a region facing significant challenges. Kuwait has been appropriately recognized as a regional leader in meeting humanitarian challenges. In this way, Kuwait is investing in the stability of the region. Kuwait is also a regional leader in constitutional and participatory governance. Kuwait's media has retained its vibrancy and its independence, allowing for a free exchange of views, charting a path for Kuwait's future. These are all distinctions of which the Kuwaiti people can justifiably be proud.

It is my honor to serve as U.S. Ambassador to Kuwait. I look forward to exploring new ways for the Governments of the United States and Kuwait, and for Americans and Kuwaitis, to work together. I thank the people of Kuwait for the warm welcome they have shown my family and me over the past five months and look forward to creating more friendships with the Kuwaiti people. Once again, "Alf mabrook" to our Kuwaiti friends on the marking of these proud milestones.

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On the occasion of the National and Liberation days Pizza Hut launches campaign to recognize heroes working day and night for the safety and security of Kuwait



On the occasion of the National and Liberation days, the renowned food chain, Pizza Hut, launched a campaign to recognize the heroes of the society who work day and night and during the holidays to ensure the safety, health and security of the society. Pizza Hut teamed with local social influencers to visit these heroes and share the joys of the February holidays.

extend gratitude to those who spare no efforts in serving the society and provide comfort to each individual, be it doctors, nurses, hospital emergency workers, firefighters, police or engineers among others.

The initiative is a continuation to Pizza Hut's investments in the local community since it first opened in Kuwait, committing to take part in social initiatives that put a smile on the face of its customers and society as a whole.

Pizza Hut also invited citizens and residents to join the campaign and





KUWAIT: Kuwaiti families chat with security officials as they celebrate Kuwait's 56th National Day and 26th Liberation anniversary. Kuwait National Day is celebrated on the 25th of February to mark the creation of the state in 1961. The National Day is the most celebrated holiday in this Arab country. The nation-wide festivities include an elaborate fireworks display, public meetings and conferences, get-togethers with food and drink for everyone and lots of entertaining activities. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

KUWAITING FOR LOVE



By Nejoud Al-Yagout

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We showed the world and ourselves, more importantly, that inclusiveness is more than just a pipe dream.

On June 26, 2015, IS attacked the Imam Sadiq Mosque in Kuwait during Friday prayers and in the holy month of Ramadan, killing 27 Shiite worshippers and injuring more than 200. Within half an hour, our Amir, HH Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, arrived at the scene of the attack. When the guards present at the site saw him, they asked him to leave the area, which was not secured yet, but with tears in his eyes, he responded: "These are not my people; these are my children."

Never before had a ruler of a country come to the scene of a terrorist attack so swiftly, but this is indicative of the potential for unity in Kuwait. Although there are separate mosques for Sunnis and Shiites, on the day of the attack, they prayed side by side in mosques around Kuwait, a country in which Shiites are a minority, comprising around 30 percent of the population and a little over 36 percent of the Kuwaiti citizen population. The funeral for the 27 martyrs who died was attended by 200,000 citizens. In a country that houses around 3,370,000 residents, the turnout was astronomical!

The outpouring of love in our community in the aftermath was even praised by neighboring countries. As a nation mourned, there were, thankfully, no vigilantes who took the law into their hands. Instead, the ammunition used in retaliation was love. People took to social media to send

messages of love in honor of those who either lost their lives or were injured. And both locals and expats rushed to blood banks to donate blood for those in need. Additionally, doctors, nurses and medical staff - who were not even on duty - tended to the injured. Posters around Kuwait displayed the loving words of our ruler: "These are my children."

Kuwait sent a message, loud and clear, that tragedy is an opportunity to bring the unity back in a community; a community that is, unfortunately, dictated by social and financial status, tribes, race, nationality and religion. Still, in the aftermath of the attack, all the people living in Kuwait came together, regardless of our backgrounds. We showed the world and ourselves, more importantly, that inclusiveness is more than just a pipe dream.

All across town, citizens and expats participated in efforts to alleviate the shock and pain of the attack. Runq8 - a charity race in Kuwait organized by the Fawzia Sultan Rehabilitation Center - held solidarity walks from Sunday, June 27 until Thursday, July 1 at Hamra Tower. And a local bank ran an ad in which a young boy asked his father whether he was Sunni or Shiite, to which his father responded: "You are Kuwaiti." Though the ad did not mention the foreigners living in Kuwait, it was still a message of solidarity, albeit an exclusive one. These were our acts of defiance. We let anger and grief manifest into

acts and messages of goodwill.

Sadly, though, mere months later, we resumed our old ways, which is often the case for human beings. In fact, my father constantly reminded us that the word for human being in Arabic - insan - is etymologically derived from nisyān, which means forgetfulness. And, now, almost two years since the attack, we seem to be taunting expats even more than ever before.

There are proposals to put in place stringent laws that will affect only foreigners. It is as though we are channeling all our fears of a possible economic recession or terrorist attack on our guests, who come here for a better life, only to experience dismay at our intolerance against those who are not from here.

But, love is the frequency that will help us ascend. It is stronger than conditioning, racism, intolerance, hate, fear, exclusivity. So much stronger. And perhaps during the national celebrations, we can remember that it does not take an invasion or a terrorist attack to embrace everyone.

And perhaps we can also remember that National Day is not about basking in patriotism, but a day that includes everyone living in this nation, Kuwaiti or not. Essentially, our collective nation is Earth, which is way beyond borders and includes all sentient beings.

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WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU LOSE YOUR **wallet** IN KUWAIT

'Lost driver's license, Civil ID most important to replace immediately'

By Ben Garcia

I lost my wallet two weeks ago with all my important identification and bank cards inside. This unfortunate incident led me to face the tedious bureaucratic process of reacquiring my Civil ID card and driving license, which unquestionably are the most important and most-needed documents for any expat in Kuwait.

The first step

When you lose hope of finding your wallet, the next thing to do is to report the incident to the authorities and set the process in motion. The police desk was cooperative. When I told the police officer I had lost my wallet, he asked where and when it happened. In order to continue with the process, the police at the desk provided me with all the documents needed to file the report.

First, you will need a letter from your employer for the driving license and Civil ID. Along with it, you need to provide a copy of your company's etimad tawqia (authorized signature form), a copy of your passport and a printout from the traffic department of the lost/stolen license.

In my case, the police told me that this can be done in a day. But my boss was out of Kuwait, so there was no way I could secure the documents I wanted in a day. I had to wait till he returned, as he is the only person allowed to sign the letter. This is why the etimad tawqia is needed - to verify the signature. After my boss returned, he signed my request, and I immediately went to the police station for the papers that I had to take to the traffic department in Jabriya.

Jabriya traffic department

There, the police papers will be attached to a typed form in a room, for which you are required to pay KD 1. After securing the typed documents, the next step is to go to another room where an officer conducts a brief interview to find out why you need a new license. This officer seems to be the final arbiter to decide if you are allowed to get a new driving license. If you are denied, you will have to go to a higher-ranked police officer in the building for an appeal. But since I already had a license, I only needed him to sign.

The officer signed and told me to take the signed documents to another counter. At that counter, I faced a new issue - officers told me to pay the penalties, which took another hour. When I returned, another issue arose - I needed to provide them my photograph for the license. I didn't have one, but a photography room there does it for free. The wait for the new license starts only after your papers are accepted at the



"You will need a copy of your company's etimad tawqia (authorized signature form), passport copy and a printout from the traffic department."

counter. Here, they'll print out your new license and your name will be called when it's ready.

The Civil id procedure

For my Civil ID, I didn't know it can be reissued even without a police report. Though I did obtain papers from the police, when I went to the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI), they did not ask for the police report. What they needed

though was a copy of the civil ID, passport or both.

But take note of this important point - you must have a debit card to pay the penalty of KD 20 (no cash is accepted) for the lost Civil ID card. Since my ATM card was also stolen along with my wallet, I had to ask someone else to pay using his debit card (which is allowed). I then repaid him in cash. The entire process took three days - from inquiry to paying the fines to finally getting the ID card.

in my view

THENATOPHOBIA-FEAR OF VIOLENCE

By Ramona Crasto

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Returning to Kuwait was so exciting; I have a perfect job, life and family. All that I could wish for, I have. But all of a sudden, a deep feeling of fear crawls through me, raising my heartbeat. Every day there is a new attack, every day thousands are dying. I fear violence. Strange but true, every time I step out of my house, I am scared. Travelling alone, traveling anywhere scares me. Like me, billions were raised in a lifestyle that saw minimum violence; we had playful summers and snow-fighting winters. Just like the temperature, these terror attacks still give me goose bumps.

I start to wonder if I am safe. Will there ever be peace?

After the recent attacks, I told my friend that I am having a hard time. There is a fear inside me, accumulating on a daily basis. She said that I was suffering from Thenatophobia, meaning fear of violence. Suffering? It's a feeling so many people experience daily. This statement

alone makes my stomach sink, thinking how many children must have walled-off their heart without sharing a word of their fear.

Is the future generation going to be born in such a world? Kids learn what they see. Scary, annoying, but true. I grew up watching Superman and Batman save the world, and I am still a fan of Ironman. I always thought good triumphs over evil. Well, does it? Is there an end to this? Will future generations grow up witnessing this ugly side of our world?

Someone asked me where I see myself in 10 years. Well, some place peaceful, rather alive. I agree not every country has faced an attack but how do I convince myself it won't reach my door step? Every time I take a bus in broad daylight, I am scared of people, being a young girl, we face weird experiences that make us suspicious about people. This fear can also fall under the same category.

Unknown people showing friendly gesture no more makes me happy, all I feel is suspicion, whether they want to hurt me or abuse me in any way. This constant fear of something bad that is going to happen is what has become a prison world for us which we cannot even see. For instance, we avoid empty streets, avoid traveling alone after noon, keep our close ones informed about our where-

abouts, keep ourselves busy in our phones while traveling, avoid making new friends easily even though we travel with the same commuters for years. This world that we have made for ourselves is a prison, however liberal we become. We still live in a cage to be safe from someone or something.

The world is ready to face attacks from aliens. What about the ones that we live with? The circle ends with the same question: Are we safe? Is there an end to this? And by that I mean in the right way. Innocence cannot pay the price for inhuman acts anymore. At first, I was scared of isolated bags and suitcases; somewhere deep inside I prayed it shouldn't turn out to be what I feared. But now, everything scares me; if vehicles can turn into weapons, what else should I not expect in this developing world of ours?

Attacks and wars are everywhere. Is everyone waiting for the apocalypse, wondering if that is the start of something or an end? I pray for all the souls, especially those young spirits who were the future of this world. Their souls seek justice. Not for the living but for the sake of the dead, someone has to stop these acts. We don't need super powers to become superheroes; it is the power of our determination that makes us one. I am sad to live in a world where villains exist, but no superheroes!

DRUGS VIA SEA? SUSPECTS ARRESTED



By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Marine security men arrested a gang of four persons who attempted to smuggle drugs into the country via sea. Radars spotted a boat picking what is thought to be drugs. 103 pieces of drugs were found.

Mol rewards officers

Interior Ministry Undersecretary Lt General Suleiman Al-Fahad has rewarded Assistant Undersecretary for Criminal Security Maj General Abdelhameed Al-Awadhi along with several officers and policemen from the Criminal Detectives Department. Lt General Al-Fahad conveyed greetings of Deputy Premier, Interior Minister Lt Gen (Rt) Sheikh Khalid Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah. He told them they deserve to be appreciated for their sincere efforts and outstanding performance. The officers were rewarded for solving more than 100 cases of vehicle thefts in a short time, and arresting four gangs that used to dismantle cars and smuggle them abroad.

Jabriya building fire

Hawally Fire Center responded to a call about a fire in a Jabriya building. The fire started on the third floor. The building was evacuated and trapped people were rescued. No injuries were reported.

URINATING IN THE SINK?

KUWAIT: Director General of Ahmadi Governorate Security Directorate Brig Abdallah Saffah sent a letter to Interior Ministry Undersecretary to deport an expat for urinating in a cleaning sink. A security source said the emergency team of Ahmadi governorate saw the expat urinating in the sink when they went to inspect the store. The suspect claimed that he had to urinate in the sink because the bathroom is far from the store.

Kuwaiti attacked

A citizen accused two women and their father of storming his house and attacking him, his sister and his niece. The victim said they have some unresolved case. He gave police details of the attackers.

Wanted man nabbed

Hawally police arrested a Bangladeshi man who has been in violation of residency law for more than three years, and wanted on other financial cases. The man started running as soon as he saw police nearby, so he was chased and caught.

Woman attempts suicide

Police received a call about a woman attempting suicide in her Jabriya house. Security operatives and paramedics rushed her to Mubarak hospital. Doctors said the drugs she took made her unconsciousness.

Cars thieves arrested

Four citizens were arrested for stealing cars. The four suspects were using a towing truck to carry parked cars - claiming they needed repair. Detectives received several complaints from citizens and expats about their cars being stolen, so detectives launched investigation and identified the four suspects. The suspected were later detained.—Al-Anbaa

News

In brief

Weather expected to be clear and sunny

KUWAIT: Rain is expected to continue until midnight while the weather will clear during the weekend, said an official at Kuwait Meteorological Center Abdulaziz Al-Qarawi yesterday. Al-Qarawi said that thundershowers might be expected with the lowest and high temperatures reaching between 7 to 9 Degrees Celsius. As for today and tomorrow, the official said that the weather will hopefully become clear and sunny with low and high temperatures reaching between 21 to 24 Degrees Celsius. Tomorrow evening, however, will witness a drop in temperature with the lowest being at 9 Degrees Celsius, said Al-Qarawi. Kuwait had been recently under the influence of northeastern and northwestern winds, which resulted in the weather being moderately cold and rainy.

KPC earmarks KD 5 million for training

KUWAIT: Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) has earmarked KD five million for training in the 2016-2017 fiscal year, an official of the corporation said yesterday. Speaking at a news conference, KPC Deputy Managing Director for Training Hamad Al-Subaiee, said a number of staff who have taken part in seminars and training workshops at the KPC training center will reach 26,000 by end of the current fiscal year - higher than the plan to train 23,000. Affirming the KPC policy to enhance the personnel skills and professional potentials, he noted that the corporation regularly coordinates with its subsidiaries for sharpening the staff skills.

KRCS firmly supports humanitarian efforts

KUWAIT: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) firmly supports all efforts that run parallel to the society's foreign policy, which is based on benevolence and philanthropy, KRCS Chairman Dr Hilal Al-Sayer said yesterday. Speaking after a meeting with Djibouti's Ambassador to Kuwait Mohammad Ali Moumen, Al-Sayer said that KRCS is willing and ready to work with humanitarian organizations in the Northeastern African nation. Meanwhile, the Djiboutian envoy told KUNA that his country highly appreciates Kuwait's humanitarian efforts that have mitigated the affliction of the human race. He also applauded KRCS for its support of impoverished nations across the African continent, noting that an aid package earmarked for Djibouti is in the works.



Kuwait ambassador to Belgium Jasim Al-Budaiwi seen with other top officials during the Kuwait national day reception.

EU'S PRESIDENT PRAISES KUWAIT DEMOCRATIC VALUES, FREEDOMS

BRUSSELS: The President of the European Council Donald Tusk has praised Kuwait's efforts to enhance democratic values and freedoms, pointing out that, this made Kuwait a unique state in the region. This came during the presentation ceremony of the credential letter of Kuwait's ambassador to the European Union (EU) Jassim Al-Budaiwi Wednesday evening.

Ambassador Al-Budaiwi in a statement to KUNA said that he conveyed

the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, to Tusk, and his wishes of more progress and prosperity to the EU member states. Tusk emphasized on the importance of EU-Kuwaiti relations and lauded the international prestige and respect for the State of Kuwait, especially in its multiple efforts in many areas, most notably humanity.

Al-Budaiwi praised the progress in Kuwaiti-European relations as evident from the recent signing of the cooper-

ation agreement that includes multiple areas to strengthen and activate these relations, including political, security and economic fields, and the training of Kuwaiti cadres in many European institutions. The Kuwaiti envoy added that the coming period will witness the exchange of high-level visits between Kuwait and the EU that will contribute to strengthening further the bilateral relations and open up new prospects for cooperation between the two sides. —KUNA



Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah holds talks with Bahrain's Deputy Interior Minister Lieutenant General Adel Khalifa Al-Fadhel. — KUNA

Kuwait, Bahrain discuss security cooperation, ties

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah has discussed with Bahrain's Deputy Interior Minister Lieutenant General Adel Khalifa Al-Fadhel issues of bilateral interest. The Ministry of Interior said in a statement yesterday that Minister Sheikh Khaled and Lieut Gen Al-Fadhel discussed on security cooperation between the two brotherly countries, regional and Gulf security issues. Lieut Gen Al-Fadhel conveyed greetings of the Kingdom of Bahrain to the State of Kuwait, namely the leadership, the government and the people on the occasion of the National Days.



Kuwaiti Ambassador in Japan Abdulrahman Al-Otaibi poses for a group photo with the Embassy Staff.—KUNA Photos



Kuwait Ambassador in Saudi Arabia Sheikh Thamer Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah cuts the cake during the Kuwait national day reception.

KUWAIT EMBASSIES MARK 'NATIONAL DAYS' IN STYLE

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti embassies, consulates, and diplomatic missions abroad continued yesterday to celebrate Kuwait's 56th National Day, 26th Liberation Anniversary, and 11th occasion of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's rule of the country. In Tokyo, the Kuwaiti Embassy held a large reception, which brought some 900 guests in an atmosphere of happiness and harmony. State Ministers for Foreign Affairs Kentaro Sonoura, Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike and other high-ranking officials, political and military figures, businessmen, academics, diplomats, and media figures as well as representatives of the Japan-Kuwait Society attended the ceremony.

In his speech at the reception, Sonoura expressed his pleasure with the development of the relationship between Kuwait and Japan over the past 56 years. "Just as the visit clearly indicates, we see steady progress in our relationship in various fields such as politics, economics and culture, through mutual visits of high-ranking officials and various public and private people-to-people exchanges," the official noted.

Meanwhile, he stressed that the Japanese people will never forget the heart-warming support by Kuwait in response to the 2011 earthquake-tsunami disaster in the northeastern region as well as another major quake in the southern prefecture of Kumamoto last year. "A friend in need is a friend indeed," he added. On his part, Kuwaiti Ambassador to Japan Abdulrahman Al-Otaibi emphasized that the Kuwaiti-Japanese relations have been on a steady upward trend.

Embassy in Saudi

In Riyadh, the Kuwaiti embassy held celebrations under the supervision of Ambassador Sheikh Thamer Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah with the attendance of senior Saudi officials as well as Arab and foreign diplomats. Speaking during the event, Sheikh Thamer congratulated the political leadership in Kuwait headed by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah and the Kuwaiti people on the happy return of the country's national days.

The celebrations reminded Kuwaitis of the sacrifices carried out by the nation's forefathers, said Sheikh Thamer who affirmed it was important to rejuvenate patriotic sentiments to keep loyalty to the land and leadership alive. He took the chance to express Kuwait's desire to further solidify relations with Saudi Arabia led by King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, affirming that the Kingdom always stood on the side of Kuwait during joyous occasions and darkest hours. A books exhibition was held on the sideline of the celebrations, displaying Kuwait's cultural treasures.

Embassy in Indonesia

The Kuwaiti embassy in Jakarta, Indonesia, held a reception yesterday celebrating the national occasions with the event being attended by scores of local officials as well as Arab and foreign diplomats. Kuwaiti Ambassador Abdulwahab Al-Saqer took the chance to thank those sharing Kuwait's celebrations, affirming that the attendees of the event have reflected their countries and organizations true sentiments towards his country. He also congratulated the Kuwaiti leadership and people on the advent of the national occasions.

Embassy in Qatar

In Doha, Qatar, the Kuwaiti embassy held similar celebra-

tions. Attended by senior Qatari officials as well as Arab and foreign diplomats, the celebrations in Qatar reflected the strong ties binding Kuwait and the rest of the region and the world, said Kuwaiti Ambassador Hafeeth Al-Ajmi. He affirmed that Kuwait's special regional and international status made people flock to the celebrations. The Ambassador also took the chance to congratulate the Kuwaiti leadership and people on the advent of national occasions. Exhibitions, showcasing the history of education in Kuwait and the Gulf nation's 2035 development vision, were held on the sideline of the event.

Embassy in Pakistan

In Islamabad, Ambassador to Pakistan Nassar Al-Mutairi hosted a reception, which gathered dozens of Pakistani ministers, senators, ambassadors of many countries and other high officials. Addressing the gathering Al-Mutairi said: "On this jubilant and happy occasion, I would like to avail this opportunity to extend my sincere felicitation and benediction to His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and to the Government and the people of the State of Kuwait." "I pray to Allah almighty to perpetuate the blessings of peace and stability on my country," he said.



Kuwaiti Ambassador Hafeeth Al-Ajmi and senior Qatari officials during the reception

Ambassador Al-Mutairi added that relations with Pakistan are perfect model to be followed by other countries, as these relations have strong historical roots and are based on mutual respect and cooperation in all fields and areas. Recalling the visits to Pakistan by His Highness the Amir in 2006 and His Highness the Premier Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah in 2013, the Ambassador said:

"These visits reflect the high importance and close relations between the two sisterly countries. With the passage of time these relations are further strengthening." The chief guest of the ceremony, Minister for Inter-Provincial Coordination Riaz Hussain Peerzada said in statements to KUNA: "I am honored to be here as the chief guest on behalf of the Government of Pakistan, Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and people of Pakistan."

Embassy in Jordan

In Amman, Ambassador to Jordan Dr Hamad Al-Du'a'ij host-

ed a reception which brought together a large number of Jordanian ministers, lawmakers and public figures, as well as ambassadors of many countries. Al-Du'a'ij expressed best wishes for His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister, as well as the Kuwaiti people on this occasion. He praised the special ties between Kuwait and Jordan, voicing hope for further cement them in order to serve the interests of the both nations. On the sidelines of the ceremony, a book fair was held to display a range of publications on the history and cultural movement of Kuwait.

Embassy in Austria

In Vienna, Kuwait Ambassador to Austria Mohammad Sadeq Ma'rafi hosted a reception to mark the occasion with dozens of well-wishers attending. Ma'rafi welcomed the guests who included Austrian senior officials, lawmakers, business leaders and public figures, as well as several ambassadors to Austria and the UN Office in Vienna. He extended his best regards to His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister, as well as the Kuwaiti people on this occasion. He said the Kuwaiti-Austrian ties, dating 52 years ago, kept growing in various fields thanks to the excellent political ties and visit exchanges. Austrian Minister of Justice Wolfgang Brandstetter, the chief guest, said his country considers Kuwait an old friend and a reliable partner in all political, economic and cultural domains.

Embassy in UAE

As part of celebrations to mark the national days, the Embassy in Abu Dhabi organized singing and theatrical performances at Yas Mall, which attracted a large number of shoppers and visitors. The patriotic performances, offered by Kuwait's Al-Jahra folklore troupe, renewed allegiance to Kuwait under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir. Speaking to KUNA on the sidelines of the performances, Othman Al-Amir, head of the troupe, said: "We are taking part in the national celebrations to highlight the cultural heritage of our country." "The troupe, founded 90 years ago, continues to deliver its national duty for conserving our invaluable heritage through the folkloric arts," he said. Al-Amir expressed best wishes for His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister, as well as the Kuwaiti people on this occasion.

Embassy in Egypt

The Embassy in Cairo and the diplomatic mission to the Arab League co-hosted a reception to mark the national days. Ambassador to Egypt Mohammad Al-Thuwaikh welcomed the large number of guests, who included Egyptian ministers, senior officials, lawmakers, public figures and business leaders, as well as diplomats of friendly countries based in Cairo. The guests included, inter alia, Egyptian Parliament Speaker Ali Abdulaal, Minister of Petroleum Tarek Al-Mullah, Minister of Immigration and Expatriate Affairs Nabila Makram and Minister of Parliamentary Affairs Omar Marawan, as well as Secretary General of the Arab League Ahmad Abul-Gheit.—Agencies

International

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2017

Sacked Turkish academics take protest to the streets



US envoy Tillerson in Mexico to soothe ties



Pakistan on edge as six killed in Lahore bomb blast



MOSUL: Smoke billows as Iraqi forces attack Mosul airport during an offensive to retake the western side of the city from jihadists of the Islamic State group yesterday. —AFP

IRAQI FORCES ENTER IS-HELD MOSUL AIRPORT

MOSUL: Iraqi forces yesterday thrust into Mosul airport on the southern edge of the jihadist stronghold for the first time since the Islamic State group overran the region in 2014. Backed by jets, gunships and drones, forces blitzed their way across open areas south of Mosul and entered the airport compound, apparently meeting limited resistance but strafing the area for suspected snipers. "Right now thank God we're inside Mosul airport and in front of its terminal. Our troops are liberating it," Hisham Abdul Kadhem, a commander in the interior ministry's Rapid Response units, told AFP inside the airport.

Little was left standing inside the perimeter and what used to be the runway was littered with dirt and rubble. Most buildings were completely leveled but Iraqi forces celebrated the latest landmark in the four-month-old offensive to retake Mosul. While Iraqi forces were not yet deployed in the northern part of the sprawling airport compound and sappers cautiously scanned the site for explosive devices, IS appeared to offer limited resistance. As Iraqi forces approached the airport moments earlier, attack helicopters fired rockets at an old sugar factory that stands next to the perimeter wall, sending a cloud of ash floating across the area. The push on the airport was launched at dawn and Iraqi forces stormed it within hours from the southwest.

US forces

The regional command said elite forces from the Counter-Terrorism Service were simultaneously attacking the neighboring Ghazlani military base, where some of them were stationed before IS seized Mosul in June 2014. Control of the base and airport would set government forces up to enter Mosul neighborhoods on the west bank of the Tigris, a month after declaring full control of the east bank. All of the city's bridges across the river are damaged. The US-led coalition has played a key role in supporting Iraqi forces with air strikes and advisers on the ground, and yesterday US forces were seen on the front lines.

The American troops are not supposed to be doing the actual fighting but in recent weeks have got so close to the front that they have come under attack, coalition spokesman Colonel John Dorrian said. "They have come under fire at different times, they have returned fire at different times, in and around Mosul," Dorrian told reporters on Wednesday. He declined to say if there had been any US casualties in the attacks, but an unnamed official later told CNN that several personnel had been evacuated from the battlefield.

The latest push to retake Mosul, the country's second city and the last stronghold of the jihadists in Iraq, was launched on Sunday and involves thousands of security personnel. They

started closing in on the airport four days ago. It is unclear how many jihadists tried to defend the airport but US officials said Monday that only around 2,000 remain in Mosul. There are an estimated 750,000 civilians trapped on the city's west bank, which is a bit smaller than the east side but more densely populated. It includes the Old City and its narrow streets, which will make for a difficult terrain when Iraqi forces reach it because they will be impassable for some military vehicles.

Letters from the east

The noose has for months now been tightening around Mosul and the living conditions for civilians are fast deteriorating. Residents AFP has reached by phone spoke of dwindling food supplies forcing many families to survive on just one meal a day. Medical workers say the weakest are beginning to die of the combined effect of malnutrition and the lack of medicines, which IS fighters are keeping for themselves. An army plane late Wednesday dropped thousands of letters written by residents of the retaken east bank to their fellow citizens across the river. "Be patient and help each other... the end of injustice is near," read one of them which was signed "People from the east side." "Stay in your homes and cooperate with the security forces. They are your brothers, they came to liberate you," read another. — AFP

SYRIA REBELS ANNOUNCE CAPTURE OF AL-BAB FROM IS

BEIRUT: Turkish-backed Syrian rebels announced yesterday they had taken full control of Al-Bab from the Islamic State group, marking a key defeat for the jihadists after weeks of heavy fighting. The town of Al-Bab, just 25 kilometers south of the Turkish border, was the last IS stronghold in the northern Syrian province of Aleppo. "We are announcing Al-Bab completely liberated, and we are now clearing mines from the residential neighborhoods," said Ahmad Othman, a rebel commander.

"After hours of fighting, we chased out the last remaining IS rank and file that were collapsing after the fierce shelling of their positions," he added. Turkey's state-run Anadolu Agency reported that rebels were now in control of central Al-Bab. It said fighters had surrounded the town to "break" IS's will but had held off on storming the centre "with the aim of preventing civilian casualties."

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights however said IS fighters were still present in parts of the town and the

rebels were in control of less than half of it. Rebels launched an offensive to capture Al-Bab last year with the support of Turkish ground troops, artillery and air strikes. Al-Bab was IS's last remaining stronghold in Aleppo province, after a US-backed alliance of Kurdish and Arab fighters seized the town of Manbij in August. The jihadist group still controls a scattering of smaller villages and towns in the province.

Tall task ahead

Field commanders from two other

rebel factions in the town confirmed the capture of Al-Bab to AFP. "On Wednesday, we captured the city centre, which was IS's security zone... The jihadists collapsed, and this morning around 6 am (0400 GMT) we completed the operation," said Saif Abu Bakr, who heads the Al-Hamza rebel group. Abu Jaafar, another rebel field commander, said he expected clearing up operations would be wrapped up within hours. "Dozens of IS fighters were killed and we evacuated more than 50 families from inside Al-Bab," Abu Jaafar said. —AFP

HUNDREDS PROTEST AGAINST NETANYAHU'S AUSTRALIA TRIP

SYDNEY: Several hundred pro-Palestinian protesters demonstrated in Sydney yesterday against the first visit to Australia by an Israeli prime minister, branding Benjamin Netanyahu a "war criminal". A police helicopter hovered over the city as speakers slammed Canberra's strong support of Netanyahu and his government. "We are here to oppose Australia's support for Israel, for a racist apartheid nation," pro-Palestinian author and Australian lawyer Randa Abdel-Fattah said.

"It's disgusting to see that some of our Australian leaders have rolled out the red carpet and welcomed a war criminal into Australia," she said. "But there are so many Australians who are against this and we are raising our voices loudly and clearly today, to say (Prime Minister) Malcolm Turnbull, and (Foreign Minister) Julie Bishop, 'not in our name'," she added. A large banner was unfurled depicting Netanyahu with a moustache as Hitler and the word "Fascist" written underneath.

Pro-Israel supporters were also on the streets and The Australian newspaper reported that riot squad officers removed a man who approached the crowd shouting "long live Israel." The demonstrators, organized by the local Palestine Action Group, tried to march on Netanyahu's hotel but were cut off by police well short of the city centre building overlooking the harbor. Ahead of Netanyahu's arrival Wednesday, some 60 business leaders, academics, members of the clergy and former politicians signed a letter saying Australia should not welcome Netanyahu, claiming his policies "provoke, intimidate and oppress" the Palestinians. —AFP



ANKARA: This file photo shows academics and students shouting slogans during a protest against the dismissal of academics from universities following a post-coup emergency decree, in the Dil ve Tarih Coğrafya campus of Ankara University. —AFP

SACKED TURKISH ACADEMICS TAKE PROTEST TO THE STREETS

FIRED ACADEMICS PROVIDE FREE LESSONS ACROSS PARKS

ANKARA: In the heart of Ankara, Turkish communications lecturer Sevilyay Celenk gives a lecture to dozens of attentive students. But her lecture is not taking place on a campus, or even in a hall, but at a park, where the crowd has braced the bitter cold to hear her. Celenk is one of about 5,000 Turkish academics who have been dismissed under a controversial state of emergency imposed after the failed July 15 coup. In a show of defiance across parks in Ankara, fired academics provide free lessons once every two weeks, lecturing on various topics including class and identity.

Since the coup attempt which tried to overthrow President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, over 100,000 people have been sacked or suspended from the public sector under emergency decrees. The university sector has been one of the hardest hit, with many lecturers accused of having links to US-based preacher Fethullah Gulen, whom Ankara has blamed for the coup attempt, and also to Kurdish militants.

Illegal dismissal

Celenk said that when she was dismissed in one of the emergency decrees on Jan 6, she felt anger at what she called a "frightening removal of any democratic, dissident, leftwing" section of society. "I felt a healthy anger, because we are faced

with a truly unjust, illegal and unfounded dismissal," she told AFP after her latest outdoor lecture to an audience including former students, on the concept of resistance. She says she has been targeted because she signed a petition along with over 2,000 other academics calling for peace in Turkey's restive southeast.

Among the 330 academics dismissed earlier this month, 115 had signed the petition, local media reported. Ibrahim Kaboglu, a prominent specialist on constitutional law, was also among the latest to be sacked. "They took away our right to education, to schooling. It's a frightening process. It's like they are trying to pour concrete on our school," Ilkyaz Gencdal, a former student of Celenk's at Ankara University, said after the 15-minute lecture. "Most of our classes have been left without a lecturer," Gencdal added.

No faculty at Ankara University will be shut down and that each department was finding replacements. The government has insisted that any mistakes will be rectified, and last month a decree was issued to set up a commission to assess appeals from people who claim they were wrongly suspended or fired. But the education ministry said it would not comment on individual cases.

Rights won on streets

Nuriye Gulmen was suspended last

year from her job as lecturer at Selcuk University in the central Turkish province of Konya, and formally sacked in January. Since November, she has been standing every day by an Ankara statue of a woman that celebrates human rights. Gulmen has been detained 23 times by the police during her nearly 100-day protest. "Until today, wherever there have been success for workers and the public-if they have won rights-they have won this on the street," Gulmen said. Her next move will be to go on hunger strike until she can return to her work. She was accused of having ties to Gulen's group, claims which she strongly denies, adding that she has not been shown any evidence.

Gulmen, who lives in self-imposed exile in Pennsylvania, has denied orchestrating the coup bid. Gulmen began her protest alone but she is now joined by other fired workers including Acun Karadag, a middle school teacher who said her doctor believed her dismissal caused heart problems. But Gulmen, who has previously been accused of links to a Marxist militant group but denies links to other illegal organizations, said "there was no other path" but street protests. "We are not rich people. Our families educated us with difficulty," Gulmen said, later adding she was living on people's sofas. —AFP

YEMEN LOYALISTS PUSH BACK REBELS ON RED SEA COAST

ADEN: Yemeni government forces made gains around the Red Sea coastal town of Mokha in heavy fighting overnight as they rebuffed a rebel counter-offensive, a military source said yesterday. Seven loyalist troops and 16 rebels were killed in the fighting, hospital sources said. Twelve soldiers and 28 rebels were wounded. Government forces captured Yakhtul, 14 kilometers north of Mokha, and Jabal al-Nar, 10 kilometers to the east, consolidating their grip on the town they overran on February 10, the military source said. Twelve rebels were taken prisoner.

On Tuesday, government forces had suffered a major setback in the offensive they launched in January to try to recapture Yemen's 450 kilometer Red Sea coastline, which had previously been almost entirely in rebel hands. Rebel forces counterattacked, killing a deputy army commander and 18 other troops. The loyalists' capture of Mokha was their biggest success in months. Despite nearly two years of military support from a Saudi-led coalition, government forces are largely restricted to the south and areas along the Saudi border. The rebels still hold the capital Sanaa and much of the central and northern highlands as well as most of the Red Sea coast.

The government's next goal is the main Red Sea port city of Hodeida, a vital conduit for UN-supervised aid deliveries to rebel-held areas. Coalition air strikes on Hodeida province late on Wednesday killed seven rebels and wounded 15, military sources said. The raids targeted an arms warehouse in Bayt al-Faqih and a missile launcher in Bajil. —AFP

YEMEN REBEL ROCKET KILLS POLICEMAN ON SAUDI BORDER

RIYADH: Rocket fire by Yemeni rebels killed a policeman and wounded a civilian on the Saudi side of the border, the civil defense department said late on Wednesday. They were the latest casualties inside the kingdom since Saudi Arabia began leading an Arab military coalition that intervened in its southern neighbor to support President

Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi in March 2015. At least 128 people have died in southern Saudi Arabia since the intervention began—some in border skirmishes, others in rocket fire.

Video footage circulating on social media showed shattered glass and a trail of blood at the entrance to a court building in Dhahran South that its posters said was the

aftermath of the Wednesday rocket strike. The building's front wall was pockmarked from shrapnel. A guard house appeared to have taken the brunt of the strike, and a policeman sat slumped and bloodied in his chair, apparently dead.

The death toll has been far higher on the other side of the border. More than 7,400

people have been killed in Yemen since the Saudi-led intervention began, including around 1,400 children, according to World Health Organization figures.

The UN humanitarian coordinator for Yemen, Jamie McGoldrick, said on Tuesday that the death toll was closer to 10,000.—AFP



GENEVA: UN Syria envoy Staffan de Mistura briefs the press after speaking to a group of Syrians holding a vigil to urge parties in the intra-Syrian negotiations to find a solution to the plight of detainees, abductees and missing persons, on the first day of a new round of Syria peace talks in Geneva yesterday.—AFP

UN ENVOY MEETS SYRIAN RIVALS

HOPES DIM FOR PEACE TALKS

GENEVA: The UN's Syria envoy launched consultations yesterday with rival sides in the six-year conflict, but hopes of breakthrough are clouded by persistent violence and deadlock over the country's political future. Staffan de Mistura began separate meetings with Syrian regime and opposition delegates in Geneva, notably to discuss the agenda and the format for the negotiations proper—the first UN-hosted peace talks in 10 months. The opposition High Negotiations Committee (HNC) said Wednesday that it wants direct negotiations with the regime, but both sides would have to agree. Neither regime delegation chief Bashar Al-Jafaari nor opposition team chief Nasr Al-Hariri spoke as they arrived at UN offices in the Swiss city.

De Mistura said he planned to host an opening meeting later in the day with both sides. On the eve of the talks—the fourth brokered by the United Nations and the first since April last year—Russia called on Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad to stop bombing during the discussions. But just hours after rival delegations arrived, de Mistura admitted there was limited ground for progress. "Am I expecting a breakthrough? No, I am not expecting a breakthrough," the veteran diplomat said, noting that "momentum" toward further talks was likely the best that can be hoped for.

Call for direct negotiations

An HNC spokesman said the umbrella group wanted face-to-face discussions with government representatives. "We ask for direct negoti-

ations... It would save time and be proof of seriousness instead of negotiating in (separate) rooms," Salem Al-Meslet told AFP on Wednesday. During three previous rounds of talks in Geneva last year, the rivals never sat down at the same table, instead leaving de Mistura to shuttle between them.

This time, de Mistura has voiced hope that he will manage to bring the two sides together for direct talks. The ground—both in territory and diplomatically—has shifted since the last UN-sponsored talks broke up in April 2016, and the rebels are in a significantly weaker position. The army has recaptured the rebel bastion of eastern Aleppo and the United States, once staunchly opposed to Assad, has said it is reassessing every aspect of its Syria policy under President Donald Trump. But the toughest issues remain similar to those in the last round in April 2016.

Bloody message

The latest truce was brokered in late December by opposition supporter Turkey and regime-backer Russia ahead of separate negotiations in Kazakhstan that also involved Iran. The deal has reduced violence but fighting flared again this week including a government bombing campaign on rebel territory around Damascus. The HNC charged that Assad was trying to send "a bloody message" before the talks resume. A bitter dispute over Assad's fate also continues to divide the camps.

The HNC has insisted he must leave

office as part of any deal, while Damascus has said the president's future is not open for negotiation. De Mistura's office has said that the talks remain focused on "political transition". For the UN, that term can include a broad range of scenarios but the opposition sees it as implying Assad's removal. Forcing the Syrian president from power had been the stated goal of Barack Obama's administration but Trump's election has muddied the US stance.

Trump has said that defeating the Islamic State group is Washington's top priority in the region and that the US would be narrowly focused on American interests. On Thursday the US special representative to the Syrian crisis Michael Ratney was due to attend the opening ceremony, the US office at the UN in Geneva said. The UN envoy acknowledged that the change of leadership in Washington had injected new uncertainties into the peace process.

"I'm not criticizing, I'm not complaining," he told reporters but added that all camps were looking "forward to seeing what their strategy is." For the Syrian opposition there is urgency—this is the fourth round of UN-brokered talks, and violence which has killed more than 310,000 people over the last six years.

"We hope to see something achieved here in Geneva 4 because there is no way Syrians will be moving to Geneva 5 with this cost they are paying in Syria," said the HNC spokesman. "We hope to end it right now here."—AFP

MALI SOLDIERS, ARMED GROUPS HOLD FIRST JOINT PATROL IN NORTHERN TOWN

GAO, Mali: Malian soldiers staged their first joint patrol yesterday with members of rival armed groups in the town of Gao where Islamist militants killed more than 77 people last month in the deadliest such attack in the country's history. The long-awaited patrol is part of an initiative aimed at easing local tensions so that government forces can focus on fighting the militants. More such patrols are due over the next few weeks under the terms of a 2015 UN-brokered peace deal.

Hundreds of soldiers from Mali's army, France's operation Barkhane, the UN peacekeeping mission, the Tuareg separatist Coordination of Azawad Movements and pro-government militias took part in the patrol, a Reuters witness said. They moved through the town on foot and in pick-up trucks, starting at around 9.45 a.m. local time (0945 GMT) on a roughly 7-km route and met no resistance, the witness said.

The Jan 18 attack in Gao claimed by al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb shows the difficulty faced by the government and international peacekeepers in combating militant Islamist groups, some with links to al Qaeda, based in the desert north. Gao is a town of 50,000 people on the banks of the Niger river, where the offices of the 13,000-strong UN mission in Mali, MINUSMA, were flattened by a truck bomb in December. A French-led military intervention in 2013 pushed insurgent groups back from northern Mali—a vast desert area they had taken the year before—but Islamist militants still conduct frequent attacks there.—Reuters

SOMALIA'S NEW PRESIDENT APPOINTS PRIME MINISTER

MOGADISHU: Somalia's President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed has appointed a political newcomer as the prime minister just before he departed to Saudi Arabia for his first foreign trip since he was inaugurated. Somali-born Norwegian national Hassan Ali Khaire, the former executive Africa of the British energy explorer Soma Oil, was appointed as the new prime minister yesterday morning. Mohamed, who was inaugurated as president on Wednesday, also holds US citizenship. He was elected earlier this month in a step toward establishing Somalia's first fully functioning central government in a quarter-century.

The new president has vowed to make security a priority in a country where Somalia's homegrown Islamic extremist group, Al-Shabab, still carries out deadly attacks in the capital, Mogadishu, and elsewhere.—AP



MOGADISHU: Somalia's newly appointed Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khaire, also spelt Khaire, talks on the phone in Mogadishu yesterday.—AFP



MEXICO CITY: US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson is welcome by US ambassador Roberta Jacobson, left, and Mauricio Ibarra, center, director of North American affairs at the Mexican foreign affairs ministry as he arrives at Benito Juarez International Airport in Mexico City.—AP

US ENVOY TILLERSON IN MEXICO TO SOOTHE TIES

MEXICO DOES NOT BELIEVE IN WALLS BUT IN BRIDGES

MEXICO CITY: US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson meets with Mexican leaders yesterday to try to calm a row over President Donald Trump's trade and immigration policies. Trump has outraged Mexico by vowing to build a wall along the border to keep out migrants, whom he branded rapists and criminals during his presidential campaign. His government on Tuesday issued new orders to the authorities to begin arresting and deporting illegal immigrants, many of them Mexicans. Trump has also threatened to put up barriers to Mexican exports, shift jobs from that country back to the United States and even halt remittances by US-based Mexicans back to their families.

Now he has sent Tillerson and Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly to Mexico City to smooth over tensions and discuss with Mexican Enrique Pena Nieto how to curb cross-border migration and drug-trafficking. "It's significant that the president is sending the secretaries to Mexico so early in the administration. It's symbolic of the meaningful relationship that our two nations have," White House spokesman Sean Spicer told reporters on Wednesday.

"These are important meetings regarding the president's agenda to improve the quality of lives for both people of Mexico and the United States by combating drug traffickers and finding ways to bolster both our economies through a broader relationship that promotes commerce and legal immigra-

tion." Tillerson and Kelly were scheduled to meet with Pena Nieto at 1900 GMT after talks with Mexico's ministers of foreign affairs, finance and government.

Respect

Trump's stance on Mexico has driven the countries' relations to their lowest point in years. Pena Nieto canceled a planned meeting with Trump in Washington last month over the US leader's vow to make Mexico pay for the wall. US government officials said Tillerson and Kelly will aim to convince Mexico that it values their bilateral ties. Spicer insisted Mexico and Washington have "a very healthy and robust relationship with the Mexican government."

But Maureen Meyer, an expert at the Washington Office on Latin America, a US human rights advocacy organization, said "relations have been severely strained by the Trump administration's rhetoric and actions." "Secretary Tillerson has an opportunity to set relations on a more sound footing based on mutual respect," she said in a statement.

Security

The US immigration authorities have arrested hundreds of people across the country as part of Trump's pledge to crack down on illegal immigrants. Kelly on Tuesday issued new orders to step up the detentions. Speaking in Guatemala on Wednesday before traveling to Mexico, Kelly said "my sincere advice to any citizen considering mov-

ing to the United States in crossing our boundaries irregularly-migration-my best advice is to not do it."

Mexico has hinted it could use border cooperation as a bargaining chip. "We have been a great ally to fight problems with migration, narcotics," Mexico's Economy Secretary Ildefonso Guajardo told the Canadian newspaper *The Globe and Mail*. "If at some point in time things become so badly managed in the relationship, the incentives for the Mexican people to keep on cooperating in things that are at the heart of (US) national security issues will be diminished."

But Mexico has a lot to lose: it relies on the United States as a trading partner, sending 80 percent of its exports to its northern neighbor. The United States has meanwhile allocated \$2.6 billion worth of aid to Mexico for fighting crime under the 2008 "Merida initiative," US officials say.

Trade

Vowing to protect US industry, Trump has called for a renegotiation of the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement with Mexico and Canada. Pena Nieto has promised to defend Mexico's interests and called for respect from the United States. "Neither confrontation nor submission: the solution is dialogue and negotiation," he said last month. "Mexico does not believe in walls. Our country believes in bridges."—AFP

CONSERVATIVES LEARN DEALING WITH TRUMP CAN BE COMPLICATED

WASHINGTON: For the past eight years, thousands of conservative activists have descended on Washington each spring with dreams of putting a Republican in the White House. This year, they're learning reality can be complicated. With Donald Trump's presidential victory, the future of the conservative movement has become entwined with an unconventional New York businessman better known for his deal-making than any ideological principles. It's an uneasy marriage of political convenience at best.

Some conservatives worry whether they can trust their new president to follow decades of orthodoxy on issues like international affairs, small government, abortion and opposition to expanded legal protections for LGBT Americans - and what it means for their movement if he doesn't. "Donald Trump may have come to the Republican Party in an unconventional and circuitous route, but the fact is that we now need him to succeed lest the larger conservative project fails," said evangelical leader Ralph Reed, who mobilized his organization to campaign for Trump during the campaign.

"Our success is inextricably tied to his success." Trump is to address the Conservative Political Action Conference Friday morning. Vice President Mike Pence is to speak yesterday, as are White House chief of staff Reince Priebus and senior advisers Steve Bannon and Kellyanne Conway. As conservatives filtered into their convention hall Wednesday for their annual gathering, many said they still have nagging doubts about Trump even as they cheer his early actions. Social conservatives were thrilled by a Wednesday night decision to reverse an Obama-era directive that said transgender students should be allowed to use public school bathrooms and locker rooms matching their chosen gender identity.

"He's said that on multiple occasions that he's not a conservative, especially socially," said Zach Weidlich, a junior at the University of South Alabama, "but my mindset was, give him a chance, especially now that he's elected." "He was the better of two evils given the choice," said Timmy Finn. "I agree with his policies, however, I think he's moving a little too fast." Trump has a somewhat tortured history with CPAC, an annual convention that's part ideological pep talk, part political boot camp for activists. Over the past six years, he's been both booed and cheered. He's rejected speaking slots and galvanized attendees with big promises of economic growth and electoral victory.

Aggressive style

At times, he has seemed to delight in taunting them. "I'm a conservative, but don't forget: This is called the Republican Party, not the Conservative Party," he said in a May interview on ABC's "This Week." Matt Schlapp, chairman of the American Conservative Union, which hosts CPAC, said Trump's aggressive style is more important than ideological purity. "Conservatives weren't looking for somebody who knew how to explain all the philosophies. They were actually looking for somebody who would just fight," he said. "Can you think of anybody in America who fits that bill more than Donald Trump?"

The tensions between Trump's brand of populist politics and conservative ideology will be on full display at the three-day conference, which features panels like "Conservatives: Where we come from, where we are and where we are going" and "The Alt-Right Ain't Right At All." — AP



WASHINGTON: In this photo, US President Donald Trump speaks during a meeting on the Federal budget in the Roosevelt Room of the White House in Washington. —AP

CUBAN DISSIDENTS HONOR OAS SECRETARY-GENERAL DENIED ENTRY

HAVANA: A group of Cuban dissidents on Wednesday recognized the secretary-general of the Organization of American States for defending human rights in their country even though the government denied him entry to attend the ceremony. About a dozen dissidents and diplomats from the US, Czech Republic and Sweden honored Luis Almagro at the home of the late democracy activist Oswaldo Paya, who died in a 2012 car accident. Paya's daughter Rosa Maria

invited Almagro to receive the prize from her group in Havana. She has accused the Cuban government of causing the wreck, a charge the government denies.

Almagro sent dissidents a letter saying that the OAS's only interest is to help move Cuba closer to the values and principles upheld by the organization in relation to democracy and human rights. He also said his intention is not to evaluate Cuba's internal politics. In his letter, Almagro said the

Cuban government told him it was astonished he was involved in what it called "anti-Cuban" activities. He also said he hoped the government would not retaliate against the group.

The communist-run government also denied entry to former Mexican President Felipe Calderon and former Chilean Education Minister Maria Aylwin, both of whom were invited to attend the ceremony. On Wednesday, the Cuban government released a

statement saying Paya intended "to launch a grave, open provocation against the Cuban government, generate internal instability, hurt the image of the country and, at the same time, damage the progress of diplomatic relations between Cuba and other countries." Cuba has not belonged to the OAS since 1962. It considers the organization an instrument the US government uses to pressure countries that do not follow its policies.—AP

ECUADOR TO HOLD RUN-OFF IN TENSE PRESIDENTIAL VOTE

QUITO: Ecuador will hold a run-off presidential election in April after a hard fought and inconclusive first round, the electoral commission said Wednesday. The voting is being watched closely to see if oil-producing Ecuador will become the latest leftist-run country in Latin America to shift to the right. It could also determine the immediate fate of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, who has been holed up in Ecuador's embassy in London since 2012 to avoid going to Sweden to face rape charges.

In voting on Sunday, ruling party leftist candidate Lenin Moreno finished first but fell short of the margin needed to avoid a run-off. He will face a run-off on April 2 against his conservative rival Guillermo Lasso. With 99.5 percent of the votes counted, Moreno, a former vice president under President Rafael Correa, garnered 39.3 percent of the votes, against 28.1 percent for Lasso, a former banker, the National Electoral Council said.

Under Ecuadoran law, in the first round the winner needs at least 40 percent of the votes and a margin of victory of at least 10 percentage points to avoid a run-off. Opinion polls and analysts suggest Moreno faces a tough challenge in the second round since conservative voters from other parties are likely to rally behind Lasso. "Any party could beat the governing one in the second round because there is major resistance to and rejection of the government," said political scientist Paolo Moncagatta of Quito's San Francisco University before Sunday's vote.

Correa however remained defiant that his side could win and extend leftist rule after his decade in power. "Everything indicates that we will win in the second round," he said. Lasso alleged fraud in the vote count, but the electoral council denied the accusation. His supporters rallied in protest at the delay in publishing full results outside the council's headquarters, where scuffles broke out with police on Monday. Lasso has vowed to cut spending and taxes, shifting away from the current government's tax-and-spend policies.

He has also said he will move to end Assange's asylum in Ecuador's embassy in London. That protection has shielded Assange from arrest for possible extradition to the United States for leaking diplomatic cables that embarrassed Washington. Correa on Wednesday denounced the idea of ejecting Assange as a breach of his rights. Moreno has said he will allow Assange to stay in the embassy. The election is a test of the legacy of Correa, an outspoken critic of the United States. A victory for Lasso would mean a fresh setback for the left in Latin America, after similar swings to the right in Argentina, Brazil and Peru.—AFP



WASHINGTON: Activists and protesters with the National Center for Transgender Equality rally in front of the White House, in Washington. —AP

CONSERVATIVES HAIL END OF TRANSGENDER BATHROOM RULE

TRANSGENDER RIGHTS ADVOCATES VOW TO OVERCOME SETBACK

WASHINGTON: Conservatives are praising the Trump administration's rollback of public school bathroom requirements for transgender students, saying the move corrects a legal overreach by the Obama administration that is best left for states to decide. Transgender rights advocates, meanwhile, are vowing to overcome a major setback. "We're not discouraged. And we're going to keep fighting like we have been and keep fighting for the right thing," said Gavin Grimm, a transgender teen who sued his Virginia high school over its bathroom access policy and whose case is set to be heard by the Supreme Court next month.

The Justice and Education departments said Wednesday that public schools no longer need to abide by the Obama-era directive instructing them to allow transgender students to use bathrooms and locker rooms of their chosen gender. That guidance, issued in May, led to a spate of lawsuits over how it should be applied, according to a letter from the departments being sent to schools nationwide. The agencies said they withdrew the guidance to "in order to further and more completely consider the legal issues involved." Anti-bullying safeguards for students will not be affected by the change, according to the letter.

But advocates of protections for transgender teens said the overall rollback sends "a message that something is wrong with them,

which is harmful," said Nancy Haque, co-executive director of Basic Rights Oregon. Grimm's case also could be in jeopardy with the guidance now lifted. The high court could decide not to hear it and direct lower courts to settle that issue instead. There won't be any immediate impact on schools, because the Obama guidance had been temporarily blocked since August by a federal judge in Texas, one of 13 states that sued over the directive. And schools remain free to provide the same treatment to students even without guidance.

No daylight

The earlier guidance was based on the Obama administration's determination that federal sex discrimination law known as Title IX, applies to gender identity. It will now be up to states and school districts to decide the issue of bathroom access. The Obama guidance did not sufficiently explain its interpretation of that law, Attorney General Jeff Sessions said in a statement. "Congress, state legislatures and local governments are in a position to adopt appropriate policies or laws addressing this issue," Sessions said, adding that the department is still committed to protecting students from bullying.

"This is an issue best solved at the state and local level," Education Secretary Betsy DeVos added. "Schools, communities and families can find - and in many cases have

found - solutions that protect all students." Earlier Wednesday, White House spokesman Sean Spicer denied media reports that DeVos, who has been criticized for her stance on LGBT issues, had opposed the change but was overruled by Sessions. Spicer said any disagreement was merely over wording and timing. "There is no daylight between anybody," Spicer said, adding that DeVos was "100 percent" on board with the decision.

Conservative activists who saw it as the Obama administration meddling in local matters praised the change. Wisconsin state Rep. Jesse Kremer said he was pleased by the change but still intends to re-introduce a bill to force public school students to use bathrooms that correspond with their birth gender. "No longer will federal officials distort federal law that is meant to equalize educational opportunities for women, and no longer will they force local officials to intermingle boys and girls within private areas like locker rooms, showers, hotel rooms on school trips and restrooms," said Gary McCaleb, senior counsel for the conservative legal group Alliance Defending Freedom. However, the reversal is a setback for transgender rights groups, which had been urging Trump to keep the guidelines in place. Advocates say federal law will still prohibit discrimination against students based on their gender or sexual orientation.—AP

ACTIVISTS SEEK CORPORATE HELP FOR MYANMAR'S ROHINGYAS

BANGKOK: Activists are urging Unilever, a major investor in Myanmar, to speak out against the country's treatment of its Rohingya minority, which the UN has said may be "crimes against humanity." More than 10,000 people have joined the Facebook group for the campaign, known by the hashtag #WeAreAllRohingyaNow, and hundreds have signed on. A letter sent this week to Unilever CEO Paul Polman asked the company to clarify its stance on the Rohingya. "Silence in the face of genocide, whilst doing business, is simply not an option," said Britain based campaign organizer Jamila Hanan.

"Multinational corporations must start to speak out. They must be obliged to use their power and influence to help bring about a more just society in the regions in which they operate." Unilever did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Rights groups accuse the Myanmar army of burning homes, mass killings and rape in their sweeping counterinsurgency campaign in Rakhine state, where most of the estimated 1 million Rohingya live. The Muslim Rohingya have long faced systematic discrimination in Myanmar, a majority-Buddhist country.

Most do not have citizenship and are considered illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, even when they've lived in Myanmar for generations. The #WeAreAllRohingyaNow group is seeking a restoration of citizenship rights denied to the Rohingya by a military government in 1982. Hanan says the group chose to target Unilever because it has been responsive to activists in the past. Unilever, with some \$55 billion in revenue last year, is one of the world's largest consumer goods companies. Billions across the world buy Unilever-made Dove soap, Lipton tea, and Hellmann's mayonnaise.

The company's first factory in Myanmar opened in 2013. It now manufactures food and shampoo near Yangon. Polman is a major advocate for corporate social responsibility and has won dozens of awards in eight years at Unilever's helm. He recently signed an open letter to the UN citing concerns about Myanmar's military offensives in Rakhine State - but not on behalf of Unilever, which has kept silent on the country's politics. "We're not asking for great things," Hanan said. "We're hoping that it will lead to a statement of concern. That would be a huge step forward. It's something corporations don't do."

She said the group is waiting until next week to see if Unilever responds and if it doesn't it will start contacting members of the board of directors and shareholders directly. They plan to target other companies. "We're not going away," she said. Myanmar recently emerged from decades of isolationist military rule, holding landmark elections in 2015. Foreign investors rushed in, putting billions of dollars into one of Asia's fastest growing economies. Persecution of the Rohingya has intensified after deadly communal conflict with Rakhine Buddhists broke out in 2012. The latest bout of violence flared in October after an attack on a guard post left nine officers dead. It has displaced hundreds of thousands of people since then.—AP



RAKHINE: In this file photo, Rohingya children gather at the Dar Paing camp for Muslim refugees, north of Sittwe, western Rakhine state, Myanmar.—AP



LAHORE: Pakistani security officials examine the site after a bomb attack in Lahore yesterday.—AFP

PAKISTAN ON EDGE; 6 DIE IN LAHORE BOMB BLAST

PANIC UNDERSCORES NERVOUSNESS ACROSS THE COUNTRY

LAHORE: At least six people were killed and 30 injured after a bomb ripped through Pakistan's Lahore yesterday, officials said, the tenth attack in just under a fortnight pointing to resurgence in Islamist violence. The blast, the second to hit the provincial capital this month, crumpled cars and sent panic rippling through the city after the wave of attacks across Pakistan killed more than 130 people. "My God, my God, I saw so many bodies," said Imtiaz Ali, a barber in a Tony and Guy hair salon opposite the blast site in the posh Defense Housing Authority suburb of the city, replete with upscale boutiques and cafes.

The building where the bomb went off was under construction in a market crowded with people, including children, the 34-year-old said. "When I came out I first just saw smoke and dust... Bikes upturned. Cars destroyed. My own colleague's car windows were blown out. My clients' cars were blown out. I was close to fainting." Police and administration officials confirmed it was a bomb attack, as rescuers supplied the casualty toll. No group has immediately claimed responsibility.

Just over an hour later rumors of a second blast in another affluent area nearby sent ambulances racing to the scene, though authorities later said the reports were false. The panic underscored growing nervousness across the country as a series of assaults shook what had been a growing sense of security during a prolonged lull in violence. They included a previous bomb blast in Lahore on Feb 13 which killed 15 people, and a devastating suicide attack at a Sufi shrine in Sindh province that left 90 devotees dead.

The attacks, most of which were

claimed by the Islamic State group or the Pakistani Taliban, have dented growing optimism over the country's security after it appeared to be making strong gains in its decade-and-a-half long war on militancy. The emergence of IS and a Taliban resurgence would be a major blow to Pakistan. Analysts have said the apparently coordinated nature of the attacks suggested militants were regrouping

Military launches new operation
Islamabad launched a crackdown in the wake of the attacks, saying it has killed dozens of "terrorists" in recent days and carried out airstrikes on militant hideouts along the Afghan border. On Wednesday the military announced a nationwide anti-terrorist operation. Analysts said the military was seeking to limit militants' movements from one place to another.—AFP

GERMANY DEPORTS THIRD BATCH OF AFGHAN MIGRANTS TO KABUL

KABUL: Eighteen Afghans deported from Germany arrived in Kabul yesterday after their asylum pleas were rejected, the third batch to be sent back in recent months as Berlin speeds up the expulsions. Germany Chancellor Angela Merkel's cabinet approved new measures on Wednesday to expedite the repatriations even as controversy rages over sending people back to strife-torn Afghanistan. "An elderly man was among the deportees and the rest were young Afghans who arrived in a charter plane from Munich," Kabul airport official Taimoor Shah Hamidi said.

They were part of a third wave of repatriations of Afghans from Germany since December under a disputed Afghan-European Union deal aimed at curbing the influx of migrants. Nearly 80 Afghans, all men, have so far been sent back after their asylum applications were rejected by the German government. Berlin is under pressure to act as the migrant influx has boosted a right-wing populist and anti-immigration movement,

and the number of far-right hate crimes against foreigners has soared.

Under new measures to speed up repatriations, German immigration officials will be allowed to access smartphones and other digital devices of asylum seekers to help determine their identity and country of origin if they claim to have lost their passport. While Germany granted safe haven to most people from war-torn Syria, the government has argued that it can safely repatriate people to Kabul and other parts of Afghanistan, where German troops are part of NATO forces seeking to create stability.

But the government has faced increasing opposition at the state level against sending Afghan nationals back home to an increasingly dangerous environment. In early Feb, 23-year-old Atiqullah Akbari suffered shrapnel injuries in a militant attack in Kabul, two weeks after he was deported from Germany. Akbari was picked up by German police in January from his home in Bavaria where he had sought refuge.—AFP

BANGLADESH STOPPED EDITOR FROM FLYING

DHAKA: A prominent Bangladeshi magazine editor on bail for charges of plotting to kill the prime minister's son said yesterday he had been stopped from flying to London to visit his sick wife, despite having high court clearance to travel. Shafik Rehman, who is also a British citizen, said he was prevented from boarding a flight from Dhaka to London, where his wife is receiving treatment for leukaemia. The 81-year-old was released from jail last September, five months after he was arrested on charges of plotting to kill Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's son, sparking fears of a media crackdown.

Authorities returned his seized British passport last week after the high court granted him permis-

sion to visit his ailing wife. "The police asked to see the high court order which I have already submitted to a lower court. I showed them the order's photocopy but they said they were not advised about any clearance about my flight," Rehman said. "It's very unjust. I'm not accusing anybody, but feeling very disappointed. My wife is dying out there and she needs me beside her more than ever." Immigration authorities contacted by AFP said they needed to verify Rehman's papers.

"He will be able to catch the next flight once we are done with the procedure," a senior police official said on condition of anonymity. Rehman, a former speechwriter for the country's main oppo-

sition leader Khaleda Zia, was arrested last April on charges of plotting to murder Sajeed Wazed Joy, who lives in the United States. He denies the allegations. He was one of three pro-opposition editors arrested last year, triggering allegations by Human Rights Watch of an "organized assault on independent media".

Concerns over free speech were already high in the Muslim-majority nation after a spate of Islamist killings of secular bloggers and publishers. Rehman was a long-time editor of Jai Jai Din, a mass-circulation Bengali daily. He now edits a popular Bengali monthly magazine called Mouchake Dhil. —AFP

INDIAN POLITICIAN SPENDS STATE CASH ON LAVISH TEMPLE GIFTS

NEW DELHI: The head of India's newest state is facing condemnation after spending \$750,000 in public money on gold temple offerings to thank the gods for realizing his long-held ambition. Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao campaigned for decades for the creation of Telangana state in the south of India and had promised to donate gold to a local temple if he succeeded. On Wednesday he flew to a popular Hindu temple in a chartered plane and presented a lotus-shaped necklace weighing nearly 15 kilos and a five-kilo collar as priests chanted vedic hymns, according to media reports.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, an official in the Rao's office confirmed the donation and said it was "from the government of Telangana and its people". Social media users laid into Rao, who has been criticized in the past over his lavish use of public funds. "Rao is a great CM. Never hesitates to put his hand in the State treasury for meeting personal needs. The dictionary word is theft," said one Twitter user. "Instead of offering kg's of gold to temples and seeking miracles please do something on the ground" posted another.

Rao faced criticism last year when it emerged the state had funded a \$7.3 million official residence, fitted with bullet-proof offices and bathrooms and a movie hall. Telangana split off from neighboring Andhra Pradesh in 2014 after a long campaign for a separate state, with its champions arguing the region had been neglected by successive state governments. Rao now plans to raze the main government office complex in Hyderabad to construct a \$52 million structure according to the rules of Vastu—an ancient Hindu system of architecture. Media reports said he was planning to make a further offering to the gods over the weekend—this time a moustache of pure gold. —AFP



KACHIN: This file photo shows refugees in front of their temporary shelter near Lung Byeng village, Waimaw township in Kachin state. — AFP

THREE SOLDIERS, CIVILIAN KILLED IN KASHMIR ATTACK

SHOPIAN, India: Three Indian soldiers and a woman were killed when militants ambushed a patrol in South Kashmir early yesterday, part of an upsurge of violence that has hit the restive northern region as it emerges from winter. An army and police party was returning from a village in the Shopian district of South Kashmir when it came under attack. Four soldiers were wounded in the one-hour firefight, according to police and witnesses.

"Around 2 in the night (2030 GMT), we woke up after hearing firing on the road," the son of the woman told Reuters Television. "Our mother was sleeping upstairs. The firing stopped after an hour and when we went upstairs, we found our mother dead." Television footage showed grieving relatives; a red van with shattered windows and shards of glass on the front seat; pools of blood on the ground and bullet marks on the walls of buildings.

A search was under way for the assailants in the latest in an upsurge of militant violence since Feb. 12 that has killed eight soldiers, eight gunmen and three civilians in the part of Kashmir that is controlled by India. India is trying to contain a separatist insurgency in its northernmost region that is more than a quarter-century old. Protests flared after security forces killed a popular militant leader called Burhan Wani last July. —Reuters

MYANMAR'S WA MILITIA WARNS 'NO PEACE IN SIGHT'

YANGON: The head of Myanmar's most powerful ethnic rebel group has warned that fighting in the country's restive borderlands has reached a critical point, threatening to derail the government's wobbling push for peace. Bao Youxiang, chairman of the Wa, told dozens of armed ethnic leaders they must forge a "new path to peace" as the government's efforts to expand a ceasefire signed with some groups in 2015 have faltered, according to a leaked version of a speech seen by AFP.

Myanmar's de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi has been pushing to expand the deal, known as the NCA, since her party took power a year ago in a bid to end the decades-long conflicts rumbling across the country's borderlands. But clashes between the army and ethnic minority fighters along the China border have intensified, displacing an estimated 20,000 people and threaten-

ing the second round of peace talks slated for next month.

"The ethnic fighting happening today is heavier than ever," Bao told ethnic leaders gathered in Pangkham, the de facto capital of the UWSA's territories, on Wednesday, according to the transcript. "War in northern Kachin state and northern Shan state along the Myanmar-China border is getting worse day by day. The NCA being discussed between some ethnic organisations and Myanmar's government has brought no solution. "The many conflicts along Myanmar's road to peace... mean the dawn can't be seen."

The United Wa State Army, also known as the Wa, is the most powerful of the country's ethnic rebel factions with an estimated 25,000 heavily armed troops and strong ties to China. Its delegates stormed out of the first round of Suu Kyi's peace talks last

August over a spat about their accreditation. The group is also accused of producing and trafficking huge amounts of methamphetamine and heroin from their own mini-state on the Chinese border, and buying weapons with the proceeds.

Around 40 delegates from eight ethnic rebel armies gathered in Pangkham this week ahead of Suu Kyi's next round of peace talks, which were delayed until next month after one group threatened to boycott. Among the attendees of the USWA-led meeting were members of the Northern Alliance, a collection of four ethnic armed groups that has been locked in bitter conflict with the army since Nov. The UN's rights envoy Yanghee Lee warned last month that the humanitarian situation in Kachin state—a focal point of recent fighting—was "now worse than at any point in the past few years." — AFP

BBC JOURNALIST FACES FIVE YEARS JAIL FOR THAILAND REPORTING

BANGKOK: A British journalist with the BBC faces up to five years in a Thai jail after a lawyer brought a criminal defamation case against him over an investigation into fraud on a popular tourist island. Rights groups say the case exposes how Thailand's defamation and computer crime laws scupper investigative journalism and make it difficult to expose wrongdoing in an endemically corrupt country. The prosecution was sparked by a 2015 report by

Jonathan Head, the BBC's Southeast Asia correspondent, looking at how two foreign retirees were scammed out of their properties in Phuket.

Head appeared in a Phuket court yesterday alongside one of the victims, British national Ian Rance who is a joint defendant in the prosecution. Both pleaded not guilty.

The man bringing the prosecution is Pratuan Thanarak, a Phuket lawyer who featured in the BBC's report looking at how

Rance lost lucrative properties. Rance retired to Phuket in 2001, married a local woman with whom he had three children and bought some \$1.2 million worth of properties. Under Thai law foreigners cannot own land. But many get around that by placing properties in the name of a company they own or with locals they trust.

In 2010 Rance discovered his wife forged his signature to remove him as director and sell the properties with the

help of a network of money lenders and property agents on the island. She was jailed for four years over the scam and he has fought through the courts for years to get the properties back. The BBC's Head reported that Pratuan, the lawyer, admitted to notarizing Rance's signature without him being present. Pratuan filed a defamation case alleging the reports caused him to be "defamed, insulted or hated", according to a copy of the complaint seen by AFP.—AFP

HONG KONG SNOWDEN REFUGEES SOUGHT BY SRI LANKA AGENTS

HONG KONG: Sri Lankan refugees who sheltered fugitive whistleblower Edward Snowden in Hong Kong have been targeted by agents from their home country, a lawyer and legislators said yesterday. The story of how impoverished refugees helped the former National Security Agency contractor, who initiated one of the largest data leaks in US history, evades authorities in 2013 only emerged in September, propelling them into the media spotlight. Snowden's former hosts Supun Thilina Kellapatha and ex-soldier Ajith Pushpakumara from Sri Lanka told reporters Thursday they were "scared and nervous" about the agents' activities in Hong Kong.

"I don't feel stable... I don't have a normal life now," said Supun, a target of politically motivated violence according to his protection claim. Accompanying the asylum seekers, their lawyer Robert Tibbo and pro-democracy lawmakers James To and Charles Mok believe Sri Lankan agents have targeted the pair. In an incident which tipped Tibbo off, another asylum seeker from Sri Lanka was allegedly approached by two agents identifying themselves as officers from Sri Lanka's Criminal Investigation Department (CID), which has previously been accused of kidnapping and torture.

The agents, who were carrying files containing information and photographs about Snowden's temporary hosts, asked for specific details about them, Tibbo said. The asylum seekers' families in Sri Lanka were also harassed and threatened by police, military and government officials about their exact whereabouts and telephone numbers, with "clear intentions to locate" them, said Tibbo. "There's actually a treaty between the Hong Kong government and the Sri Lankan government for extradition... All they would have to do is make the formal request to the government, and they've never done that," Tibbo said.

Years in limbo

"It's quite clear that the Sri Lankan government has an interest in our clients' relationship with Snowden." But Sri Lankan authorities have denied this claim. "The police have no interest in the two individuals or their families," a senior police source told AFP in Colombo. "The Sri Lankan police does not have the time or the resources to send people to Hong Kong as alleged." Tibbo said they notified the city's immigration department and would soon report it to the police. Neither immediately responded to AFP's request for comment.

Lawmakers To and Mok also said they would urge the Hong Kong government and the police to offer protection to the asylum seekers and ensure their safety. The city's 11,000 marginalized refugees spend years in limbo, hoping the government will support their asylum claims. But with less than one percent of cases successfully substantiated by city authorities, most refugees live in fear of deportation. The Sri Lankan families want to go to Canada, which has a track record of taking in refugees. "I think the world owes them quite a heavy debt for (their help to) advance the cause of people who are concerned about surveillance and privacy violations by governments," Charles Mok said.—AFP



KUALA LUMPUR: United Malays National Organization (UMNO) Youth activists pose with placards during a protest outside the North Korean Embassy in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.—AFP

N KOREA LASHES MALAYSIA OVER KIM ASSASSINATION

MALAYSIA ACCUSED OF CONSPIRING WITH S KOREA

SEOUL: North Korea's state media broke a 10-day silence yesterday on the murder of Kim Jong-Un's half brother, launching a ferocious assault on Malaysia for "immoral" handling of the case and for playing politics with the corpse. In its first comments on the airport assassination of Kim Jong-Nam, KCNA said Malaysia bore responsibility for the death, and accused it of conspiring with South Korea. "Malaysia is obliged to hand his body to the DPRK (North Korea) side as it made an autopsy and forensic examination of it in an illegal and immoral manner", the North's Korean Jurists Committee said, in comments carried by the state-run news agency.

Malaysia has not released the corpse "under the absurd pretext" that it needs a DNA sample from the dead man's family, it said. "This proves that the Malaysian side is going to politicize the transfer of the body in utter disregard of international law and morality and thus attain a sinister purpose," it said. Throughout its lengthy dispatch, KCNA avoided any reference to the dead man's identity, calling him only "a citizen of the DPRK bearing a diplomatic passport". North Korea has never acknowledged him as the estranged brother of its leader. Leaked CCTV footage from the

brazen attack last Monday shows the portly Kim being approached by two women who appear to put something in his face. Moments later he is seen asking for help from airport staff, who direct him to a clinic. Malaysian police said he suffered a seizure and died before he reached hospital. An autopsy has ruled out heart failure, with investigators focusing on the theory that a toxin was applied to his face, in what South Korea has insisted was a targeted assassination.

Malaysian detectives are holding three people—women from Indonesia and Vietnam, and a North Korean man—but want to speak to seven others, including diplomat Hyon Kwang Song. But Malaysia's top policeman acknowledged yesterday that unless Hyon, second secretary at the North Korean mission, volunteers himself, they will be unable to speak to him. "We will adhere to the rules of immunity," Khalid Abu Bakar said. "We cannot go inside the embassy." Malaysian police think four North Korean suspects may have fled to Pyongyang immediately after the killing.

Wild rumors

A small group of protesters descended on North Korea's embassy yesterday, with

many carrying signs reading "Respect Malaysia". Demonstrators from the youth wing of Malaysia's ruling party handed in a letter to diplomats denouncing Pyongyang's "impermissible attitude and rudeness" and urging the North "to reconsider its aggressive approach". It was reported yesterday South Korea is using giant loudspeakers to blast news of the dramatic assassination across the border with its reclusive northern neighbor.

Seoul employed its banks of high-decibel loudspeakers to ensure details of the death of Jong-Nam, once believed to be the North's likely heir, reverberated through the border area, Seoul's MBC TV station said. "Kim Jong-Nam... died after being attacked by two unidentified women at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Malaysia," blared the message. News of the outside world is heavily restricted and censored in the North under the Kim family, which has ruled for decades with an iron fist and pervasive personality cult.

Seoul's Foreign Minister Yun Byung-Se said Wednesday in London the assassination by the North, if confirmed, would constitute a "serious breach" of international order and would be regarded as a "state-led act of terrorism".—AFP

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2017

Lifestyle

Friday Times

www.kuwaittimes.net

US singer Katy Perry poses on the red carpet arriving for the BRIT Awards 2017 in London on February 22, 2017. —AFP

David Bowie honors, George Michael tribute top Brit Awards



David Bowie's son, Duncan Jones collects the award for British album of the year on behalf of his late father for 'Blackstar' during the BRIT Awards 2017 ceremony and live show in London. — AP/AFP photos



Members of the group Little Mix from left, Jesy Nelson, Leigh-Ann Pinnock, Perry Edwards and Jade Thirwall pose for photographers upon arrival at the Brit Awards 2017.

David Bowie honors, George Michael tribute top Brit Awards

The Brit Awards recognized big international stars including Drake and Beyonce and a cross-section of home-grown talent Wednesday - but the ceremony was overshadowed by the much-missed David Bowie and George Michael. Bowie, who died in January 2016 at age 69, was crowned British male artist of the year and won British album of the year for "Blackstar," released days before his death. Bowie's son, filmmaker Duncan Jones, accepted the best album award on behalf of his father, who he said had "always been there supporting people who think they're a little bit weird or a little bit strange, a little bit different." "This award is for all the kooks, and all the people who make the kooks," Jones said. "Kooks" is the song Bowie wrote for his son when he was born.

As well as rewarding Bowie, the show paid tribute to one of the music industry's many losses of 2016 - George Michael, who died on Christmas Day aged 53. His Wham! bandmate Andrew Ridgeley said that with Michael's death, "a supernova in a firmament of shining stars has been extinguished." Coldplay singer Chris Martin performed a moving rendition of Michael's "A Different Corner" - dueting with a recording of Michael himself and backed by a group of violins.

International stars

The flashy show at London's O2 Arena opened with girl group Little Mix giving a thunderous performance of "Shout Out to My Ex," backed by a troupe of silver-painted dancers. The song went on to be named British single of the year. There were also performances by Bruno Mars, The 1975, Coldplay, Ed Sheeran, Robbie Williams and grime musician Skepta on a night where Britain's music industry celebrated UK talent and a smattering of international stars. Soulful chanteuse Emeli Sande was named female British artist of the year, while Manchester indie pop group The 1975 won the trophy for best British band.

Singer Matt Healy noted that the band, whose album "I Like It When You Sleep, for You Are So Beautiful Yet So Unaware of It" has been a hit on both sides of the Atlantic, had had the same lineup since the members were 13. Injecting a light note of politics into a show that's often slick and uncontroversial, Healy told entertainers with a platform not to heed advice to "stay in your lane when it comes to social issues." He said that "if you have a platform, don't do that. Please don't do that." Few of the winners and performers took up the invitation. The closest thing to edgi-

ness at the show was provided by a pinstripe-clad Katy Perry.

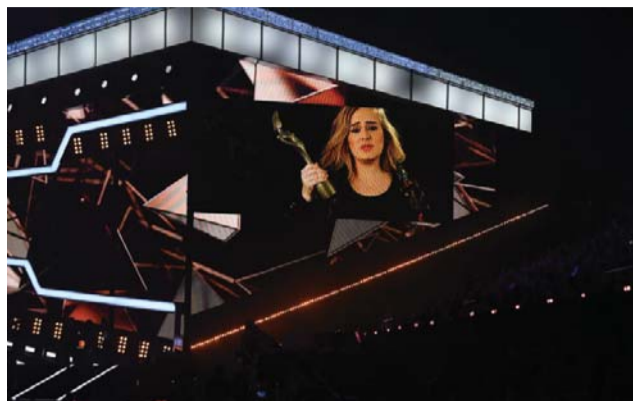
She performed "Chained to the Rhythm" - with its references to zombified people "living in a bubble" - accompanied by Skip Marley and a pair of giant skeletons dressed as US President Donald Trump and British Prime Minister Theresa May. The international awards went to global stars - none of whom came to accept them. Drake was named international male solo artist, while Beyonce took the international female prize. A Tribe Called Quest took the trophy for international group.



Members of the group Little Mix from left, Perry Edwards, Jesy Nelson, Jade Thirwall and Leigh-Ann Pinnock accept the award for Best British Single on stage.



Singer Emeli Sande performs on stage.



A big screen shows British singer-songwriter Adele accepting the BRITs global success award during the BRIT Awards 2017.



British singer-songwriter Emeli Sande (left) talks after receiving the award for British female solo artist with her sister Lucy (right).



Liam Payne accepts the award for British artist video of the year for One Direction's 'History' during the BRIT Awards 2017.

Growing artistic

Adele, who took four Grammys last week, was not up for many Brits because her album "25" was eligible last year, and won four Brits. She won this year's Global Success award, which recognizes international sales. Robbie Williams, former member of boyband Take That turned adult pop hitmaker, was given the Brits Icon award. The award for British breakthrough artist went to big-voiced soul singer Rag 'n' Bone Man, whose song "Human" has had heavy play around the world, "Oh my days," said the singer, whose real name is Rory Graham. "I'm nearly speechless." Rag 'n' Bone Man beat nominees including the favored grime musician Skepta. Grime artists Stormzy and Kano were also award contenders, reflecting the growing artistic and commercial clout of the distinctly British rap genre.

The awards have been accused of failing to represent the industry's ethnic diversity. All last year's British nominees were white, and protesters rallied under the hashtag #britssowhite. Organizers responded by expanding the diversity of the voter base of 1,000 music-industry figures. This year's list was more diverse, with Sande, soul singer Michael Kiwanuka and singer-songwriter Lianne La Havas among non-white British contenders, along with the three grime performers. La Havas, who lost to Sande for best British female artist, said on the red carpet she was glad the London-centric sound of grime was being recognized.

"For me personally, when I hear grime, because I'm from London it sounds like London to me," she said. "It does in hindsight feel a bit unusual that it was something that wasn't promoted as much. "But I also think now we've got some real stars happening in that genre, it makes a lot of sense now." Keith Harris, who was appointed to head a diversity taskforce for the British music industry, said "people feel there might actually be a breakthrough." "The question is whether this is going to be long-term or short-term," he said. "That's my concern." Most Brits winners are chosen by music-industry members, with several selected by public vote - including a best video category decided by social-media ballot during the broadcast. It was won, for the fourth year in a row, by One Direction. — AP

**Winners of 2017
BRIT Awards**

Mastercard British Album of The Year

David Bowie, "Blackstar"

British Single

Little Mix, "Shout Out To My Ex"

British Male Solo Artist

David Bowie

British Female Solo Artist

Emeli Sande

British Group

The 1975

British Breakthrough Act

Rag'n'Bone Man

Brits Global Success Award

Adele

British Artist Video of The Year

One Direction

Critics' Choice

Rag'n'Bone Man

International Female Solo Artist

Beyonce

International Male Solo Artist

Drake

International Group

A Tribe Called Quest — Reuters



Chris Martin of British band 'Coldplay' (left) duets with a recording of late British pop icon George Michael during the BRIT Awards 2017.



A big screen shows US rapper Drake accepting the award for international male solo artist during the BRIT Awards 2017.



Singer Chris Martin performs on stage.



British singer-songwriter Rory Graham, better known as Rag'n'Bone Man, accepts the award for a British breakthrough act during the BRIT Awards 2017 ceremony.



British musician Liam Gallagher presents the British album of the year award.



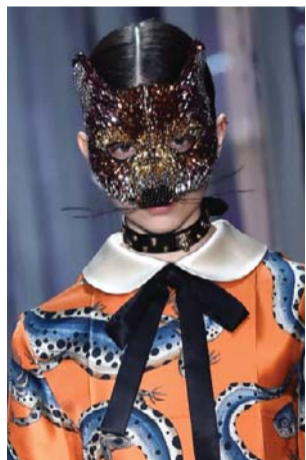
US singer Bruno Mars performs during the BRIT Awards 2017 ceremony and live show in London.



(From left) Adam Hann, Ross MacDonald, Matthew Healy and George Daniel of the British rock band 'The 1975' talk on stage after receiving the award for a British group.

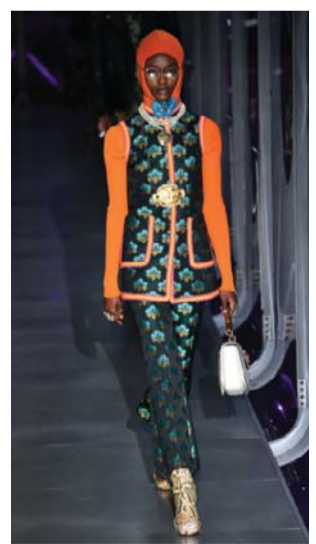


Gucci presents otherworldly fall-winter collection in Milan



Milan fashion designers launched six days of fall-winter fashion previews Wednesday, as the long-accepted runway format undergoes challenges like never before. Brands like Gucci and Bottega Veneta sat out last month's menswear previews to combine their efforts this round, while some labels, like Roberto Cavalli, were taking breaks during creative transitions.

Master showmen Dean and Dan Caten, the Canadian twins behind the DSquared2 label, opted for showroom presentations rather than a runway show, allowing a more intimate look at their wares. Here are some highlights from Wednesday's shows, including Gucci, Fausto Puglisi and No. 21.



Models wear creations part of the Gucci women's Fall-Winter 2017-18 collection, that was presented in Milan, Italy, Wednesday. — AP/AFP photos



Models wear creations part of N'21 women's Fall/Winter 2017-2018 collection.

Gucci alchemist

In his two years heading the Gucci label, Alessandro Michele has created collections that looked as if they were pulled from an attic trunk. Sheer blouses tied at the neck with a bow, floral suits and proclamations of love accompanied by tiger motifs are instantly recognizable as his, even when copied, which they are, profusely. If Michele's work to date has been concrete with clear references, his latest collection was otherworldly.

The ambitious, sometimes extreme, collection of 120 looks was viewed through a glass-encased breezeway, a passageway that served as the crossroads for bygone eras and ones yet to come. A pyramid stood at the center, topped with a rooster weather vane, seeing which way the fashion winds blow. Backstage, Michele said he approaches fashion like an alchemist, hewing to his own aesthetic.

"You take something poor and transform it into gold, into something precious," Michele said. At his most extravagant, Michele created a hooded robe of ruffles so profuse that it recalled a 17th century barrister's wig, or an adult version of a christening dress. The latter suggestion was ironically undercut by devils-horn jewelry poking out of the nose and crystal-stud-

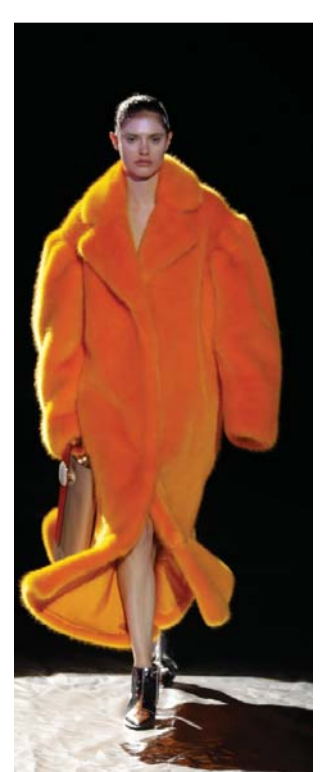
ded lightening-shaped sunglasses. The look befitted a Venetian Carnival ball.

But there was also a snugly fit black dress with a ruffle defining the curves that was as restrained and elegant as anything Michele has created at Gucci. The vastness of the tour de force collection owed to Michele's decision to show menswear alongside his womenswear collection.

For men, there were shimmering circus strongman suits with tiger motifs on the bottom half and an ab-baring circle cut on the torso. There also were suits with oversized Gucci stripes and a brand-familiar duffel coat. There was an exoticism to the looks, a meeting of worlds and a pulse of imagination. Collars were pointy or swirly. Headgear ranged from aviator caps to Gucci-embazoned headbands to enormously brimmed millinery. Umbrellas suggested by turn a Victorian-era stroll or a tropical cocktail on the beach.

But no detail was more otherworldly than crystal-studded masks that completely encased the head like a robber's stocking cap. "When you dress like this, you don't want to be anything else anymore," Michele said. He was dressed in ripped jeans and a Gucci T-shirt overwritten with the words, "I want to go back to believe in a story."

Michele appears to have settled in at Gucci. After a couple of itinerant seasons showing at a former customs railway, Michele unveiled his latest collection at the new Gucci Hub showroom and offices on the outskirts of Milan. Florence Welch and rapper ASAP Rocky were in the front row. The artists both read texts by William Blake and Jane Austen on the vinyl LP that served as the show's invitation.



Models wear creations part of Annakiki women's Fall/Winter 2017-2018 collection.



American Dreaming

Alessandro dell'Acqua's collection for No. 21 mixes all-American wholesomeness with Italian sensuality. Dell'Acqua said he was inspired by Italian actress Anna Magnani, who "exported this Italian way in America, mixing typical Italian clothes with an American style." The looks included sheer ruffle chiffon dresses with crystal applique accents and slip dresses layered over knitwear cropped radically above the cleavage. Tweet suits and overcoats shimmered, while skirts had poodle-skirt flair without the tired reference. Varsity style sweaters and jackets added an athletic touch. Satin high-heel sandals with colored ankle socks finished the looks.

Unsolved mysteries

Chinese designer Anna Yang showed her Annakiki line in Milan for the first time, one of six designers making their Milan Fashion Week debut. Yang said that the collection, both playful and sporty, was an ode to the aliens' world, and the futuristic looks and proportions were fitting for any space traveler.

Silvery iridescent materials defined the collection, giving a space-age feel to blazers with furry pink sleeves or long trailing coats over matching mini-skirts and high boots. Yang often made sleeves out of proportion, from big puffy accents to trailing cuffs and, in its most extreme, the final look, a red-hooded coat suggestive of an intergalactic fairy tale and featuring an extra six empty sleeves hanging off the front and back. Clearly it is meant for those octopus mutants among us. — AP



Models present creations for fashion house Max Mara.



Rihanna

Harvard names **Rihanna** its humanitarian of the year

Rihanna may be best known as an R&B superstar, but on Wednesday she was named the 2017 Harvard University Humanitarian of the Year for her charity work. The 29-year-old singer from Barbados will be given the award in person on campus on February 28, the university announced. "Rihanna has charitably built a state-of-the-art center for oncology and nuclear medicine to diagnose and treat breast cancer at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Bridgetown, Barbados," Harvard Foundation director S. Allen Counter said. She has also set up a scholarship program, named after her grandparents, for Caribbean students studying in the United States, and supports efforts to give girls better access to education in the developing world.

"It is for these philanthropic initiatives and other acts of compassionate sharing that the students and faculty of the Harvard Foundation chose to honor Rihanna with the 2017 Humanitarian of the Year Award," Counter said. The singer joins an illustrious roster of past recipients that includes former UN secretary general Ban Ki-Moon, Pakistani activist and Nobel Peace laureate Malala Yousafzai, and singer Lionel Richie. Rihanna, whose full name is Robyn Rihanna Fenty, has sold more than 200 million records, won eight Grammy Awards and scored 14 number-one hits. She is also celebrated for her style and collaborates with Puma on a clothing line. — AFP

US musician makes mics in Russia using **Kalashnikov** machinery

Claims of hacking by the Russian state may be feeding international tensions, but they've given Californian musician David Brown a great icebreaker when selling his line of Russian-made microphones. "We give free hacking lessons with these microphones," he tells potential buyers in Los Angeles. "Watch what you say because they never turn off." Brown, who's often toured Russia with his band Brazzaville, teamed up with fan Pavel Bazdyrev in 2013 to start making top-end musical equipment in Bazdyrev's home city of Tula, which is dominated by the Russian defense industry. Though the business climate is difficult, the costs are low and they were able to buy second-hand machinery from Kalashnikov plants. The result is a range of studio microphones that have found their way into Coldplay and Radiohead's recording sessions, and are beating more established rivals on price.

It's a rare tale in Russia, which has struggled for decades to diversify its economy beyond oil and gas, something former US President Barack Obama recently drew on. "Their economy doesn't produce anything that anybody wants to buy except oil, gas and arms," he said in December. "They don't innovate." As the country recovers from a brutal recession triggered by its dependence on the oil industry, President Vladimir Putin has often talked about making life easier for small businesses and other sectors. But reforms are often piecemeal or contradictory.

The experiences of Brown and Bazdyrev sum up many of the pros and cons of operating a small manufacturer in Russia. The company, called Soyuz Microphones, takes advantage of lower labor costs to undercut foreign competitors - Soyuz's top-of-the-range microphone costs \$3,500 against \$8,000 for rival models. It made its first mic prototypes in 2014 and sold 160 of the retro-looking items last year, enough to turn a profit. "We're located in a regional Russian city where the salaries are much lower than they are in Moscow let alone in the West. Producing a mic in that way in America or in Europe would be prohibitive cost-wise," says Brown, who visits Russia regularly to check on progress, while Bazdyrev handles day-to-day matters.

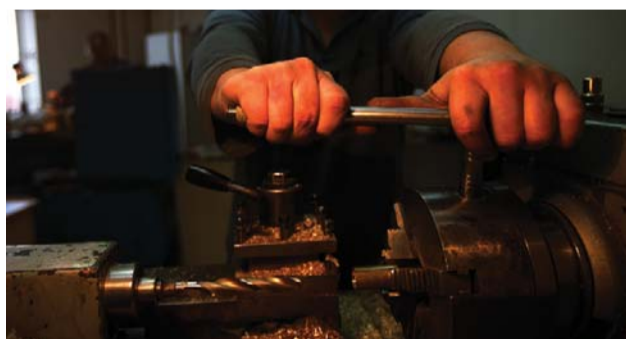
Pink wallpaper

It's a good deal for the 12 employees, too, such as lathe operator Roman Ilyukhin, who says his wage of 60,000 rubles (\$1,000) is almost double what he used to earn elsewhere in the city. The factory occupies two floors in a rundown building, its renovated rooms with pink wallpaper in stark contrast to the grey Soviet-era apartment blocks just outside. The name Soyuz - meaning "union" - refers to the "union of East and West" in the company but is also full of historical significance in what was once the Sovetsky Soyuz, the Soviet Union. Soyuz capsules have since the 1960s been the workhorse of international space flight.

The name also encapsulates some of the contradictions of the Russia economy: while it is a comparative leader in state investment for research and development, such as in space exploration, it often fails to turn cutting-edge science into commercial innovation. Wage levels are lower than in most of Europe, but Russian companies still struggle against Asian rivals who can make products faster and cheaper. "Our engineering sector, although developing actively, has not yet caught up with foreign countries to bridge the gap of the last two decades," said Moscow-based expert Vasily Abashkin of the Higher School of Economics. "Plus the Asian countries are getting ahead, including in terms of providing engineering services (faster), which makes our engineering sector less competitive."

Big consumer brands

Few small and medium-sized Russian companies have the knowhow to use government schemes meant to help exporters, Abashkin adds. Though Russia excels at software development, attempts to move into hardware like electric cars or phones have yet to make a splash. By contrast, China, which during the Cold War was similarly reliant on state-owned heavy industry, has developed successful companies like technology and retail and boasts some big consumer brands like handset company Huawei. Consumer startups in Russia can struggle in particular with the burden of regulation, predatory officials demanding bribes, and the dominant position of state-owned firms who don't welcome rivals. Brown and Bazdyrev say they never had to pay bribes, but they've been treated with suspicion in a country where foreign investment in consumer goods is rare. They say export permits are tricky to get and authorities avoid paying tax rebates. The pair originally tried to partner with a local state-controlled microphone firm, but that deal was scuttled when the entire management was fired at short notice. Bazdyrev says local officials in Tula even froze the company bank account, suspecting the firm might be a front for fraudsters. The decision was only reversed when a tax inspector visited the factory in person.



Lathe operator Roman Ilyukhin fixes a brass bar in a machine-tool's spindle to make a microphone's part at a factory in Tula, Russia.

Kalashnikov plant

Government reforms, meanwhile, have not helped much. In recent years, entrepreneurs have received tax breaks, but have also been hit with higher social security contributions. The government has talked up developing domestic industry during sanctions, but effects are largely limited to agriculture. The US and European Union sanctions against Russia, imposed since 2014, are another obstacle. Payments from abroad can be difficult to get and US authorities sometimes put them on hold. "We've got to explain that it's not in support of terrorism or anything," Bazdyrev said. He and Brown did consider moving the factory to neighboring Latvia or Estonia if the sanctions or regulations get too difficult to deal with. But for now, they say, Russia's low costs make it easier to stay put. At a tense time in world politics, Brown is pitching their microphones as a sign of cooperation, highlighting how they're made using machines from a Kalashnikov plant. "I like to think about our company as swords into plowshares," he says. "We use lathes that were made by Kalashnikov to create something that's the complete opposite of war - it's for creating music and spreading goodwill." — AP



Californian musician David Brown inspects a microphone at a factory in Tula, Russia.



A Soyuz SU-017 microphone sits on a window at a factory in Tula, Russia. — AP photos



Olga Andreyeva assembles microphone's parts at a factory in Tula, Russia.

THESE BANANA OAT MUFFINS MAKE A QUICK BREAKFAST OR SNACK

By Melissa D'Arabian

Like many families, we try to minimize the amount of processed sugar we eat. But, it is lurking everywhere, and we are eating far more processed sugar than our grandparents did. How to combat this trend that seems to have sneaked up on us? A few ideas: First, let's read the ingredient list and nutritional information on labels of every single food item we put in our carts. That sounds like a lot of work, but as we get familiar with our favorite foods, the task will become less daunting.

But we need to know exactly what is in our food, and you might be surprised by what "healthy-sounding" foods have processed sugar or other weird ingredients and chemicals hiding in them. Remember that sugar can have lots of different names, such as "syrup" or "sucrose" (the suffix "ose" usually means sugar), so the sugar gram count can be helpful.

Second, buy more foods without labels. When we buy whole foods and then cook them ourselves, we know exactly what is going into them. Third, favor sugar from natural, unprocessed, whole sources. While fruit-sweetened foods still have sugar, it's not a highly-processed derivative, and it brings with

its sweetness a full set of other nutrients. Bananas, apples and dates bring vitamins, minerals and fiber along with their sugars. Try recipes using them as sweeteners.

Last, keep production of treat items in-house, meaning make less healthy items homemade, so you can control what goes in. Craving brownies? Make them at home, so at least you see exactly what is going into the recipe, and you can even search online for slightly healthier version if you want. At minimum, you'll likely be skipping a host of flavors and preservatives than if you bought a store-made brownie sitting on the shelf for days or weeks.

My banana oat morning mini-muffins don't use any white processed sugar, and yet are just sweet enough to scratch the sweet-tooth itch. I usually bake a batch or two and freeze them for a quick breakfast or snack on-the-go, or to add a treat to their lunchbox or to a family Sunday brunch. They're small so they thaw in minutes. As a bonus for our family, I can easily make these little guys gluten-friendly for my intolerant daughter since there's no wheat flour in the recipe - I just use gluten-free oats.



Ingredients

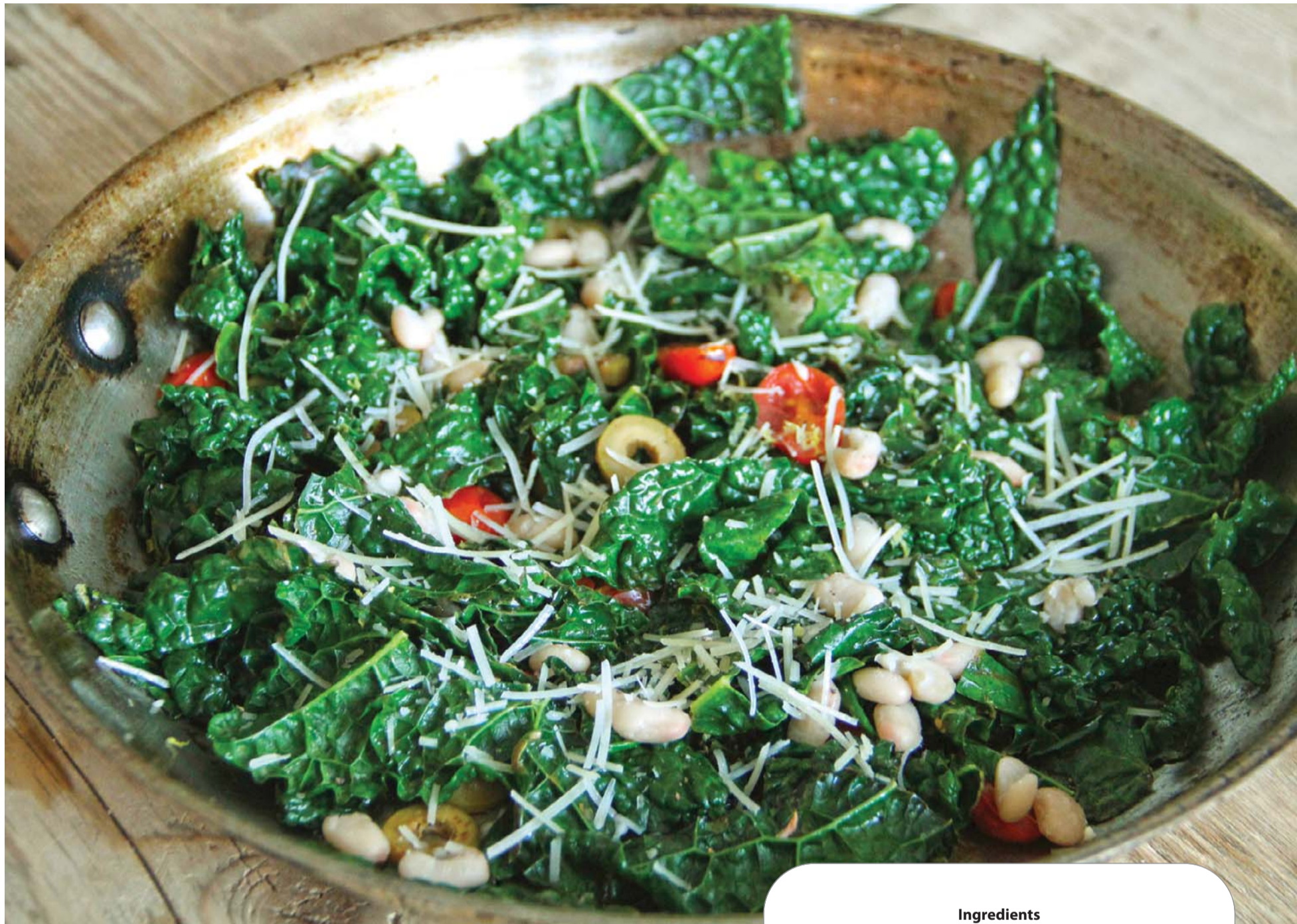
Servings: 26 muffins
Start to finish: 40 minutes
1/2 cup (gently packed) pitted dates
2 tablespoons coconut oil (or other oil or butter)
2 medium bananas, ripe, roughly chopped
2 eggs, room temperature
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1 1/4 cups rolled oats (gluten-free, if making gluten-free)
3/4 cup almond flour
1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
1/4 teaspoon baking soda

1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon salt

Preparation

Heat the oven to 350 degrees F. Mix the wet ingredients: Place the dates in a small bowl and pour 1/2 cup boiling water on them and let them sit for 5 minutes to soften. Once soft, pour off the excess water (do not drain; leave them very wet), and use a fork to smash the dates gently into a loose paste. In a stand mixer using the whisk attachment (or hand mixer), mix the date paste, coconut oil and bananas on medium high speed until soft and creamy, about 2 minutes. Add the eggs

one at a time, mixing after each one, and add the vanilla. Prepare the dry ingredients: Place the oats in a dry blender or food processor and pulse until oats become a coarse powder. Pour into a bowl and add almond flour, baking powder and soda, cinnamon, and salt and whisk to mix. Add the dry ingredients to the wet ingredients half at a time, mixing after each addition. If the dough becomes too thick for the whisk attachment, fold in using a rubber spatula. Use a small ice-cream scoop or a tablespoon to scoop dough into a mini-muffin pan fitted with paper liners. Bake until muffins spring back to the touch, about 17-20 minutes. — AP



Tuscan flavors of olives and beans make this salad a treat

By Melissa D'Arabian

News flash: Kale is still in. It's still one of the nutritional highlights in my crisper drawer, and winter is its peak season, which means it's most abundant, healthy and cheap right now.

Kale, part of the same family as broccoli, is loaded with vitamins (particularly A, C and K) as well as smaller quantities of protein, fiber and an impressive array of minerals. Plus, a cup of kale has under 35 calories, and a bunch of organic kale will set you back probably a little over a dollar right now. So, you're going to need some updated kale recipes to get your through the winter.

The two varieties most available in the supermarkets are curly kale and the darker flat-leaved version that is called Tuscan, lacinato or dinosaur kale. Tuscan kale is thicker and heartier than the curly variety, so it holds up nicely in sautees. Both kale varieties are slightly bitter in flavor and do well to be "massaged" in acid, like lemon juice, which simulta-

neously tames the bitterness and gently breaks down the kale cells, making the leaf more tender in raw or lightly-cooked applications.

Today's recipe is a saute starring Tuscan kale. I like to think of it as a warm salad with leaves made slightly more tender by a lemon juice massage and a quick saute. The main flavors are perfectly Mediterranean: anchovy paste and olives for saltiness (you can cut the quantities down if you are watching sodium), lemon zest for brightness, and garlic, which is a heart-healthy staple of the region. Small grape tomatoes add sweetness and acid, while a handful of black beans boost the already-fiber-rich kale, turning this into a side dish that means you really can serve way less meat for the main. Or, double the recipe and skip the meat altogether, which makes the dish extra healthy and wallet-friendly.

Ingredients

Start to finish: 15 minutes

Servings: 4

1 bunch Tuscan, or lacinato kale, removed from thick stem, about 12 large leaves

2 tablespoons lemon juice, plus extra lemon juice for serving, if desired

2 teaspoons extra virgin olive oil

1 clove garlic, minced

2 teaspoons anchovy paste

2 teaspoons lemon zest

A pinch red pepper flakes (optional)

2 tablespoons chopped or sliced olives

1/2 cup grape tomatoes, halved

1/2 cup cooked white beans, drained and rinsed if canned

2 tablespoons shredded parmesan cheese, for serving

Lemon wedges, for serving (optional)

Preparation

Thoroughly wash the kale leaves (no need to dry), and slice into strips. Place in a medium bowl and pour lemon juice on top of the leaves. Use your hands to massage the lemon juice into the leaves, coating well. Let sit for a few minutes while you prepare the rest of the ingredients. Heat large skillet over medium heat.

In a small bowl, mix together the olive oil, garlic, anchovy paste, lemon zest and red pepper flakes. Scrape the oil mixture into the pan and saute until fragrant, stirring with a wooden spoon, about 1 minute. Add the olives and kale leaves, stir and then cover with a lid and allow to steam for 2 minutes. Uncover and stir in the tomato halves and beans. Turn off the heat and top with parmesan cheese. Serve with lemon wedges for squeezing. — AP



Friday Times Travel



Lavish ornamental gates surround the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

The best free things to do in **Delhi**



The last resting place of Mohammed Shah Sayyid, Lodi Gardens.



Islamic motifs on the Athpula Bridge.

If there's one thing you can guarantee when travelling somewhere new, it's an unexpected cost you didn't budget for - an irresistible detour, a magical moment you just have to have, a few extra days in somewhere amazing. Take heart though; in Delhi, you can stretch your budget by exploring a string of free sights and attractions, leaving more left over for those little indulgences. When visiting India's historic capital, it's worth paying out for big-hitting sights such as the Red Fort and Qutb Minar, but don't overlook the abundant free sights and experiences in this fascinating city. Take your pick from verdant parkland, centuries-old monuments, mysticism and faith, colonial pomp and circumstance and exploring contemporary Indian culture and the arts.

Keeping the faith at the Bahai House of Worship

This lotus-shaped temple was conceived and created by architect Furiburz Sabha in the suburbs of South Delhi, close to the burgeoning commercial district of Nehru Place. In step with the tenets of the Bahai religion, the house of worship is open to all and everyone is invited to worship according to their own customs. Reflected in nine encircling pools, the gleaming marble structure is set in expansive gardens that teem with visitors, yet it retains a peaceful air of prayer and contemplation. Dusk finds the monument painted in surreal colors by floodlights as the sun sinks over the cityscape.

Soulful stirrings at the Nizamuddin Auliya shrine

You can step back seven centuries at the shrine of



There's no mistaking the inspiration for Delhi's lotus-shaped Bahai House of Worship.

Delhi's most beloved Sufi mystic. Every Thursday evening, singers fill the air with soulful qawwalis (spiritual songs) honoring both the Sufi mystic Hazrat Khwaja Syed Nizamuddin Auliya and his disciple, the poet Amir Khusrao, also buried here. A warren of narrow streets lined with hawkers, mendicant holy men and snack stands leads to the shrine, which is a riot of colours, fragrant with heady incense and sweet-smelling rose petals. Irrespective of faith, gender, or age, the Nizamuddin Dargah is one of Delhi's most emotive and stimulating spots.

Calm green spaces and crumbling mausoleums

The Lodi Gardens, formerly Lady Willingdon Park, are one of the city's favorite green spaces, visited by neigh-



The distinctive architecture of Delhi's Habitat World.

borhood residents for daily constitutionals, and a favorite spot for canoodling couples and picnicking families. Sitting pretty in the heart of New Delhi, these sprawling but well-tended acres are criss-crossed with tree-lined walking and jogging paths. Between the flowerbeds are crumbling medieval monuments - mosques, tombs, and ceremonial bridges harking back to vanished Afghan dynasties - lending the park a romantic demeanor; unsurprisingly, it's a favorite spot for romantic selfies.

Pomp and circumstance, Indian style

Despite only being introduced a decade ago, the splendid ceremony held once a week at the Rashtrapati Bhavan (President's Estate) is reminiscent of the richest excesses of India's colonial history. Highlights of this public show of military precision include an equestrian display by the President's Body Guard - an elite mounted unit founded in 1773 to escort and protect the British governor-general, and later the presidents of independent India -and a foot drill by the Army Guard Battalion, selected from one of India's infantry regiments every three years on rotation. There's no fee but spectators are required to present photo IDs at the point of entry.

Cultural synergy at Habitat World

After all the history, take a moment to explore Delhi's contemporary culture. Part of the landmark India Habitat Centre, Habitat World was founded to promote synergies between cultural institutions and artistically minded individuals, and there's always something interesting to see. This is where Delhi's arty and scholarly set can be found admiring modern artworks at the Visual Arts Gallery, sitting in on academic presentations at the Stein auditorium or encouraging amateur performers in the centre's public amphitheatre. If you work up an appetite, you can fall back on the popular All American Diner.

Raj resonance at Delhi's Coronation Park

Almost forgotten, Delhi's calm Coronation Park was created to mark the centenary of the 1911 Delhi Durbar, a grand assembly of Indian royal families hosted by Viceroy Lord Hardinge. A major event on the colonial calendar, durbars honored the ascension of a new

monarch to the British throne, which also enshrined the king or queen as sovereign ruler of India. These grand occasions were marked by processions, elephant parades, polo tournaments and parties, but today, the parade ground slumbers quietly, except for the occasional cricket match between locals, or when promenading couples stroll by. In the heart of the 60-acre park is a stone column, marking the spot where King George V anointed Delhi as the new capital of British India, and five statues of the kings and viceroys who once ruled India, now quietly fading into history.

See India through international eyes
A string of foreign nations have established cultur-

al centers in Delhi, offering a profusion of cultural experiences, from art shows to classical concerts and seminars on history, gastronomy and cultural traditions from around India and the world. The American Center (in.usembassy.gov/education-culture/american-space-india) on Kasturba Gandhi Marg, the Japan Foundation (jfindia.org.in) at Lajpat Nagar, and the Alliance Francaise (delhi.afindia.org) at KK Birla Marg are good places to start. Call ahead or visit their respective websites for schedules - concerts and performances are advertised ahead of time and most centers have well-stocked libraries and film clubs showing international movies with English subtitles. (www.lonelyplanet.com)



Qawwali singers at the tomb of Hazrat Khwaja Syed Nizamuddin Auliya.



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Studying the negatives of last year's financial program may show you the errors of your ways. Since you have already programmed a new plan, you will modify the plan now in order to see a faster rate of monetary growth. Remember to guard against physical as well as mental stress today by taking plenty of breaks and perhaps a good brisk walk-weather permitting. You will have to work harder for your earnings this week and next week. Try to laugh occasionally-it's good for your spirit. If you are single-ask someone new out to a movie or dinner. All of those plans you have been making this month can be successfully put into effect now because there is a lot of energy in this area of plans and action. Healing plays a big role in your future.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Everything points to your taking the initiative, in the workplace and at home. Good communication energies make it possible for you to push your plans forward. You could feel great support from those around you and you will feel the green light is on to accomplish more than usual. Social events are not as good as your business success. Your frame of mind has settled on work and it may be a bit difficult to move your thinking to another subject for now. You may earn money through a secret project today. Your artistic ability can shine this evening as you dive into your art or hobby project. Communication with a loved one is closer than ever at this time; a healing may have taken place. Enjoy relaxing to music this evening.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

There are cheerfulness, faith and a tendency to take chances in important matters and at special times. This may take form in political accomplishments or in writing and reporting. Writing takes on importance and you have a lot to say. Short stories, funny clips and fillers for talk show hosts are all possibilities for your earning power. You are energized by ideas today and look to all sorts of ways in which you can express yourself. Your professional life is smooth sailing. At home, close friends and neighbors have serious concerns about the environment and you are wise to listen. There may be an upcoming community meeting that a news reporter would be glad to cover; city political figures will sit up and listen! You can stir the people with the written word.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You can create a healing atmosphere today. Through your peaceful demeanor, others will stop to contemplate their own feelings. You may be making mistakes in your own work today because your mind is on so many different things at once. Stop and pace yourself-a list to help guide your steps might help you to gain some orientation. Sometimes you are able to accomplish several things at once, but this is not one of those days. This afternoon you have the opportunity to review the household budget and it looks as though it is finally in better shape than in the past. Close relationships take on more emotional depth, power and importance. This evening you find ways to praise the family members that have been helping to balance the budget.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Friendships pay off big today as someone may have a lead for you with which you can land a new job or an upgrade to your old job. The secret in getting this lead is in the networking you carry out. You may eventually help others with this endeavor. An authority figure may loom up ahead, but if you let your charisma take hold you will achieve what you set out to accomplish. New people come into your life all the time and today is no exception. You will often find yourself with a political group or in a political situation. Safeguard your professional reputation by wisely choosing your companions. Respect and achievement are central goals for you. Something needs changing this evening and you are just the person to do it.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

A difficult machine or technique may cause someone concern this morning; however, you show a great deal of patience in trying to figure out and correct a difficulty. Today seems to agree with you as you and your co-workers radiate general good feelings and lend each other support. It is important, in your category of work, to be able to interact with many of your co-workers. There is a feeling that anything is possible as you work together. This is a time of exploring new ideas and you may be part of a new planning committee soon. As if your personal world is not busy enough, volunteer work can benefit the giver as well as the receiver and is an essential part of living a full life. There is a chance for a new friend to be discovered.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Ambitious schemes seem to loom ahead all day. The need to find a new and unique fad or specialty for production has a whole group of you with heads down and writing or typing at a high rate. This brings a focus on the practical, the successful, the pragmatic-whatever it takes to get you and your work place ahead in the long run. This afternoon at home you may find it difficult to relax after a day that is most successful. Take the opportunity to consolidate your affairs and make a mental note of the steps toward your own personal success. Perhaps you could be helpful with a community problem in which you could lend some creative and positive advice. Enjoy the young people around you this evening. There are many picture opportunities.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Communication, particularly with superiors or authority figures, could prove interesting today. You may not think as they do, or you may find that your thoughts run opposite to theirs. You may be more intuitive and a supervisor may be more mathematical. You will need to go with the mathematical and bide your time on the intuitive. You will, however, still be able to shine with great results. You will also get points for respect. Believe it or not . . . The supervisor agrees with your thinking. Treat a co-worker to lunch today, as this will probably help you adjust to work thoughts, as well as boost someone's self-esteem. There is a cycle now of enlarging your scope of knowledge. Exploring, investigating, questioning and psychoanalyzing make life interesting.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

This day on the job can be productive but possibly boring-just routine. Take advantage of some rare free time for creative thinking. How are your goals coming along it is not shameful to ask for help, and as you find the help you need, you may also open doors to new knowledge. This is why you find several librarians on duty in the library. Everything seems to fall into place for you this afternoon. Okay . . . No more downgrading yourself . . . Listen to your words and learn to reframe your words. Romance and other things that tug at the heartstrings come your way as a new cycle begins. A friend or lover may come to mean a great deal to you and you may show your appreciation for the time and attention he or she has shown to you.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You will have an opportunity to express your sense of humor this morning when a family member or friend gives you the funny pages out of the newspaper or tells a funny story. A good start today gives you the added sense of humor to take your busy day a bit easier. This is a very good day for job-related events. There is confidence, faith and a propensity to take chances. Any investment regarding deep-sea research, products or projects might prove beneficial. Try to avoid becoming scattered in thought. Do something you really enjoy this afternoon. Consider a massage or some aroma therapy. A hobby this evening can be enjoyed by others in the family-a nice way of being together. Toy trains, card games, chess, checkers, etc.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Political matters come to your attention this morning. You may even decide it is time to write to the editor of your local newspaper. You are independent and full of ideas and decisions about world affairs as well as ideas about where you are headed professionally. Progressive people and idealistic groups or concepts play a more important role in your life now. There are good, steady indications that personal and business connections are improving and advancing to your benefit. You seem to keep to yourself much of the afternoon as you make plans for an upcoming event. This evening is great time to be in some fun social surroundings. Although some mysterious things may occur at home, your evening will be a fun one.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

A newly acquired project will have your complete attention until the phone rings or a co-worker needs help. It does seem difficult to stay focused. Of course, since this day is your birthday, that can be one reason for the difficulty in keeping focused. You will succeed, however, and others will understand. This may be one reason that many companies allow their employees to take off on their day of birth. You may have too many questions about a friend this afternoon. Take it easy, you will find out the details of a situation in due time. Some fun conversations with a relative will find you laughing big time. This particular relative likes to give a gift card for gifts and this year may have been quite a lot of fun. Enjoy the attention.

COUNTRY CODES

Afghanistan	0093	Kuwait	00965
Albania	00355	Kyrgyzstan	00996
Algeria	00213	Laos	00856
Andorra	00376	Latvia	00371
Angola	00244	Lebanon	00961
Anguilla	001264	Liberia	00231
Antigua	001268	Libya	00218
Argentina	0054	Lithuania	00370
Armenia	00374	Luxembourg	00352
Australia	0061	Macau	00853
Austria	0043	Macedonia	00389
Bahamas	001242	Madagascar	00261
Bahrain	00973	Majorca	0034
Bangladesh	00880	Malawi	00265
Barbados	001246	Malaysia	0060
Belarus	00375	Maldives	00960
Belgium	0032	Mali	00223
Belize	00501	Malta	00356
Benin	00229	Marshall Islands	00692
Bermuda	001441	Martinique	00596
Bhutan	00975	Mauritania	00222
Bolivia	00591	Mauritius	00230
Bosnia	00387	Mayotte	00269
Botswana	00267	Mexico	0052
Brazil	0055	Micronesia	00691
Brunei	00673	Moldova	00373
Bulgaria	00359	Monaco	00377
Burkina	00226	Mongolia	00976
Burundi	00257	Montserrat	001664
Cambodia	00855	Morocco	00212
Cameroon	00237	Mozambique	00258
Canada	001	Myanmar (Burma)	0095
Cape Verde	00238	Namibia	00264
Cayman Islands	001345	Nepal	00977
Central African Republic	00236	Netherlands (Holland)	0031
Chad	00235	Netherlands Antilles	00599
Chile	0056	New Caledonia	00687
China	0086	New Zealand	0064
Colombia	0057	Nicaragua	00505
Comoros	00269	Niger	00227
Congo	00242	Nigeria	00234
Cook Islands	00682	Niue	00683
Costa Rica	00506	Norfolk Island	00672
Croatia	00385	Northern Ireland (UK)	0044
Cuba	0053	North Korea	00850
Cyprus	00357	Norway	0047
Cyprus (Northern)	0090392	Oman	00968
Czech Republic	00420	Pakistan	0092
Denmark	0045	Palau	00680
Diego Garcia	00246	Panama	00507
Djibouti	00253	Papua New Guinea	00675
Dominica	001767	Paraguay	00595
Dominican Republic	001809	Peru	0051
Ecuador	00593	Philippines	0063
Egypt	0020	Poland	0048
El Salvador	00503	Portugal	00351
England (UK)	0044	Puerto Rico	001787
Equatorial Guinea	00240	Qatar	00974
Eritrea	00291	Romania	0040
Estonia	00372	Russian Federation	007
Ethiopia	00251	Rwanda	00250
Falkland Islands	00500	Saint Helena	00290
Faroe Islands	00298	Saint Kitts	001869
Fiji	00679	Saint Lucia	001758
Finland	00358	Saint Pierre	00508
France	0033	Saint Vincent	001784
French Guiana	00594	Samoa US	00684
French Polynesia	00689	Samoa West	00685
Gabon	00241	San Marino	00378
Gambia	00220	Sao Tome	00239
Georgia	00995	Saudi Arabia	00966
Germany	0049	Scotland (UK)	0044
Ghana	00233	Senegal	00221
Gibraltar	00350	Seychelles	00284
Greece	0030	Sierra Leone	00232
Greenland	00299	Singapore	0065
Grenada	001473	Slovakia	00421
Guadeloupe	00590	Slovenia	00386
Guam	001671	Solomon Islands	00677
Guatemala	00502	Somalia	00252
Guinea	00224	South Africa	0027
Guyana	00592	South Korea	0082
Haiti	00509	Spain	0034
Holland (Netherlands)	0031	Sri Lanka	0094
Honduras	00504	Sudan	00249
Hong Kong	00852	Suriname	00597
Hungary	0036	Swaziland	00268
Ibiza (Spain)	0034	Sweden	0046
Iceland	00354	Switzerland	0041
India	0091	Syria	00963
Indian Ocean	00873	Taiwan	00886
Indonesia	0062	Tanzania	00255
Iran	0098	Thailand	0066
Iraq	00964	Toga	00228
Ireland	00353	Tonga	00676
Italy	0039	Tokelau	00690
Ivory Coast	00225	Trinidad	001868
Jamaica	001876	Tunisia	00216
Japan	0081	Turkey	0090
Jordan	00962	Tuvalu	00688
Kazakhstan	007	Uganda	00256
Kenya	00254	Ukraine	00380
Kiribati	00686	United Arab Emirates	00976



00:20 Misfit Garage
 01:10 So You Think You'd Survive?
 02:00 Legend Of Croc Gold
 02:50 Manhunt With Joel Lambert
 03:40 Fast N' Loud
 04:30 Storage Wars Canada
 05:00 How Do They Do It?
 05:30 How Do They Do It?
 06:00 Made By Destruction
 06:25 Made By Destruction
 06:50 How Do They Do It?
 07:15 How Do They Do It?
 07:40 Impossible Engineering
 08:30 Legend Of Croc Gold
 09:20 Everest Rescue
 10:10 The Island With Bear Grylls
 11:00 Ed Stafford: Into The Unknown
 11:50 Storage Hunters UK
 12:15 Storage Hunters UK
 12:40 The Making Of Mandela
 13:30 Fast N' Loud
 14:20 Diesel Brothers
 15:10 Street Outlaws
 16:00 The Island With Bear Grylls
 16:50 The Island With Bear Grylls
 17:40 The Island With Bear Grylls
 18:30 The Island With Bear Grylls
 21:00 Fast N' Loud (Season 4 Specials)
 21:50 Diesel Brothers
 22:40 Street Outlaws



00:00 The Killing Season
 01:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
 02:00 The Jail: 60 Days In
 03:00 Homicide Hunter
 04:00 The Killing Season
 05:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
 06:00 The Jail: 60 Days In
 07:00 Evil Up Close
 08:00 Evil Up Close
 09:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
 10:00 It Takes A Killer
 11:00 I Married My Killer
 12:00 Motive For Murder
 13:00 Ms. Murder
 14:00 Murder In-Law
 15:00 Evil Up Close
 16:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
 17:00 It Takes A Killer
 18:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
 19:00 The First 48
 21:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
 22:00 Evil Up Close
 23:00 The First 48



00:30 Science Of The Movies
 01:20 NASA's Greatest Missions
 02:10 NASA's Unexplained Files
 03:00 Destroyed In Seconds
 03:25 Destroyed In Seconds
 03:50 Ultimate Survival
 04:40 How It's Made
 05:05 How It's Made
 05:30 Dirty Jobs
 06:20 Mythbusters
 07:00 Kids vs Film
 07:25 Bear Grylls Survival School
 07:50 Bondi Vet
 08:40 How It's Made
 09:05 How It's Made
 09:30 Science Of The Movies
 10:20 Mythbusters
 11:10 Bondi Vet
 12:00 Ultimate Survival
 12:50 How It's Made
 13:15 How It's Made
 13:40 Dirty Jobs
 14:30 Mythbusters
 15:20 Science Of The Movies
 16:10 Kids vs Film
 16:35 Bear Grylls Survival School
 17:00 Man v Expert
 17:50 Breaking Magic
 18:15 Breaking Magic
 18:40 Destroyed In Seconds
 19:05 Destroyed In Seconds
 19:30 How It's Made
 19:55 How It's Made
 20:20 Mythbusters
 21:10 Man v Expert
 22:00 Breaking Magic
 22:25 Breaking Magic
 22:50 Destroyed In Seconds
 23:15 Destroyed In Seconds
 23:40 Ultimate Survival

00:10 Hank Zipzer
 00:35 Binny And The Ghost
 01:00 Violetta
 01:45 The Hive
 01:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
 02:15 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
 02:40 Hank Zipzer
 03:05 Binny And The Ghost
 03:30 Violetta
 04:15 The Hive
 04:20 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
 05:10 Hank Zipzer
 05:35 Binny And The Ghost
 06:00 Violetta
 06:45 The Hive
 06:50 The 7D
 07:00 Jessie
 07:25 Jessie
 07:50 Rolling To The Ronks
 08:15 Tsum Tsum Shorts
 08:20 Elena Of Avalor
 08:45 Bunk'd
 09:10 Stuck In The Middle
 09:35 Wizards Of Waverly Place
 10:25 A.N.T. Farm
 11:15 Good Luck Charlie
 12:05 Shake It Up
 12:55 Disney Mickey Mouse
 13:00 Welcome To The Ronks
 13:15 Gravity Falls
 13:40 Hank Zipzer
 14:05 Star Darlings
 14:10 Austin & Ally
 14:35 Jessie
 15:00 Bunk'd
 15:25 Kirby Buckets

15:50 Rolling To The Ronks
 16:15 Sunny Bunnies
 16:20 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
 16:45 Elena Of Avalor
 17:10 Stuck In The Middle
 17:35 Pocahontas
 19:05 The 7D
 19:20 Disney Mickey Mouse
 19:25 The Next Step
 19:50 Austin & Ally
 20:15 Star Darlings
 20:20 Shake It Up
 20:45 Backstage
 21:10 Liv And Maddie
 21:35 Cracked
 21:40 The Next Step
 22:05 Best Friends Whenever
 22:30 Jessie
 22:55 Tsum Tsum Shorts
 23:00 Kirby Buckets



00:20 Henry Hugglemonster
 00:35 The Hive
 00:45 Loopdidoo
 01:00 Henry Hugglemonster
 01:15 Calimero
 01:30 Art Attack
 01:55 Zou
 02:05 Loopdidoo
 02:20 Henry Hugglemonster
 02:35 Calimero
 02:50 Zou
 03:05 Art Attack
 03:30 The Hive
 03:40 Loopdidoo
 03:55 Henry Hugglemonster
 04:10 Art Attack
 04:35 Loopdidoo
 04:50 Calimero
 05:05 Art Attack
 05:30 Henry Hugglemonster

05:45 Zou
 06:00 Art Attack
 06:30 Henry Hugglemonster
 06:45 Loopdidoo
 07:00 Zou
 07:15 Calimero
 07:30 Loopdidoo
 07:45 Henry Hugglemonster
 08:00 Minnie's Bow-Toons
 08:05 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
 08:15 Jake And The Neverland Pirates
 08:30 Miles From Tomorrow
 08:45 Goldie & Bear
 08:55 The Lion Guard
 09:20 PJ Masks
 09:35 Jake And The Neverland Pirates
 09:50 Doc McStuffins
 10:00 Goldie & Bear
 10:15 PJ Masks
 10:30 Minnie's Bow-Toons
 10:35 The Lion Guard
 11:00 Sofia The First
 11:30 Doc McStuffins
 11:55 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
 12:20 My Friends Tigger & Pooh
 12:50 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
 13:15 Gummi Bears
 13:40 Sofia The First
 14:10 Little Mermaid
 14:35 PJ Masks
 15:00 My Friends Tigger & Pooh
 15:30 The Lion Guard
 15:55 Unbungalievable
 16:00 Miles From Tomorrow
 16:30 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
 16:55 The Lion Guard
 17:20 Goldie & Bear
 17:50 PJ Masks
 18:15 Sofia The First
 18:40 Doc McStuffins
 19:05 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
 19:30 Little Mermaid



06:00 Danger Mouse
 06:25 Gravity Falls
 06:50 Atomic Puppet
 07:15 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
 07:25 Counterfeit Cat
 07:40 Supa Strikas
 08:10 K.C. Undercover
 08:35 Star Wars Freemaker Adventures
 09:00 Lab Rats Elite Force
 09:25 Lab Rats Elite Force
 09:50 Danger Mouse
 10:20 Supa Strikas
 10:45 Supa Strikas
 11:10 Counterfeit Cat
 11:35 Pair Of Kings
 12:30 Future-Worm!
 12:55 Lab Rats
 13:20 Lab Rats
 13:45 Atomic Puppet
 14:10 Disney Mickey Mouse
 14:15 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
 14:40 Supa Strikas
 15:05 Lab Rats
 15:30 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
 15:55 Right Now Kapow
 16:25 K.C. Undercover
 16:50 Future-Worm!
 17:15 Gravity Falls
 17:40 Lab Rats Elite Force
 18:05 Disney Mickey Mouse
 18:10 Supa Strikas
 18:35 Right Now Kapow
 19:00 Atomic Puppet
 19:25 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
 19:55 K.C. Undercover
 20:20 Kickin' It
 20:45 Mighty Med
 21:10 Danger Mouse
 21:40 Disney Mickey Mouse
 21:45 Marvel's Avengers Assemble
 22:10 Ultimate Spider-Man: Web Warriors
 22:35 Boyster
 23:00 Programmes Start At 6:00am KSA

17:00 Tonight At The London Palladium
 17:50 The Syndicate
 18:50 Emmerdale
 19:15 Emmerdale
 19:45 Coronation Street
 20:10 Couples Come Dine With Me
 21:00 Don't Tell The Bride
 22:00 Tonight At The London Palladium



00:10 Glamour Puds
 00:35 Tripping Out With Alie & Georgia
 01:00 Tom's Istanbul Delight
 01:25 A Is For Apple
 01:50 A Is For Apple
 02:15 Chocolate Perfection With Michel Roux Jr
 03:05 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
 03:30 Sara's Australia Unveiled
 04:20 Valentine Warner's Wild Table
 05:10 The Wine Show
 06:00 Chocolate Perfection With Michel Roux Jr
 06:50 Tom's Istanbul Delight
 07:15 A Is For Apple
 08:05 Chocolate Perfection With Michel Roux Jr
 08:55 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
 09:20 Sara's Australia Unveiled
 09:45 Sara's Australia Unveiled
 10:10 Valentine Warner's Wild Table
 11:00 Lee Chan's World Food Tour
 11:25 Lee Chan's World Food Tour
 11:50 Chocolate Perfection With Michel Roux Jr
 12:40 Tom's Istanbul Delight
 13:05 A Is For Apple
 13:35 A Is For Apple
 14:00 The Food Files
 14:30 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
 15:25 Sara's Australia Unveiled
 16:20 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
 16:45 Valentine Warner's Wild Table
 17:15 The Wine Show
 18:10 The Food Files
 18:35 One Man & His Campervan
 19:05 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
 19:30 Sara's Australia Unveiled
 20:00 Sara's Australia Unveiled
 20:25 Valentine Warner's Wild Table
 20:50 Valentine Warner's Wild Table
 21:15 The Wine Show
 22:05 The Food Files
 22:30 One Man & His Campervan
 22:55 Tom's Istanbul Delight



00:05 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
 00:55 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
 01:50 E! News
 02:50 Just Jillian
 04:40 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
 05:30 Fashion Bloggers
 06:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
 06:55 E! News
 07:10 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
 08:10 E! News
 09:10 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
 12:00 E! News
 12:15 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
 15:00 E! News
 15:15 Fashion Police
 16:15 So Cosmo
 17:10 Botched
 19:00 E! News
 20:00 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
 22:00 Fashion Police



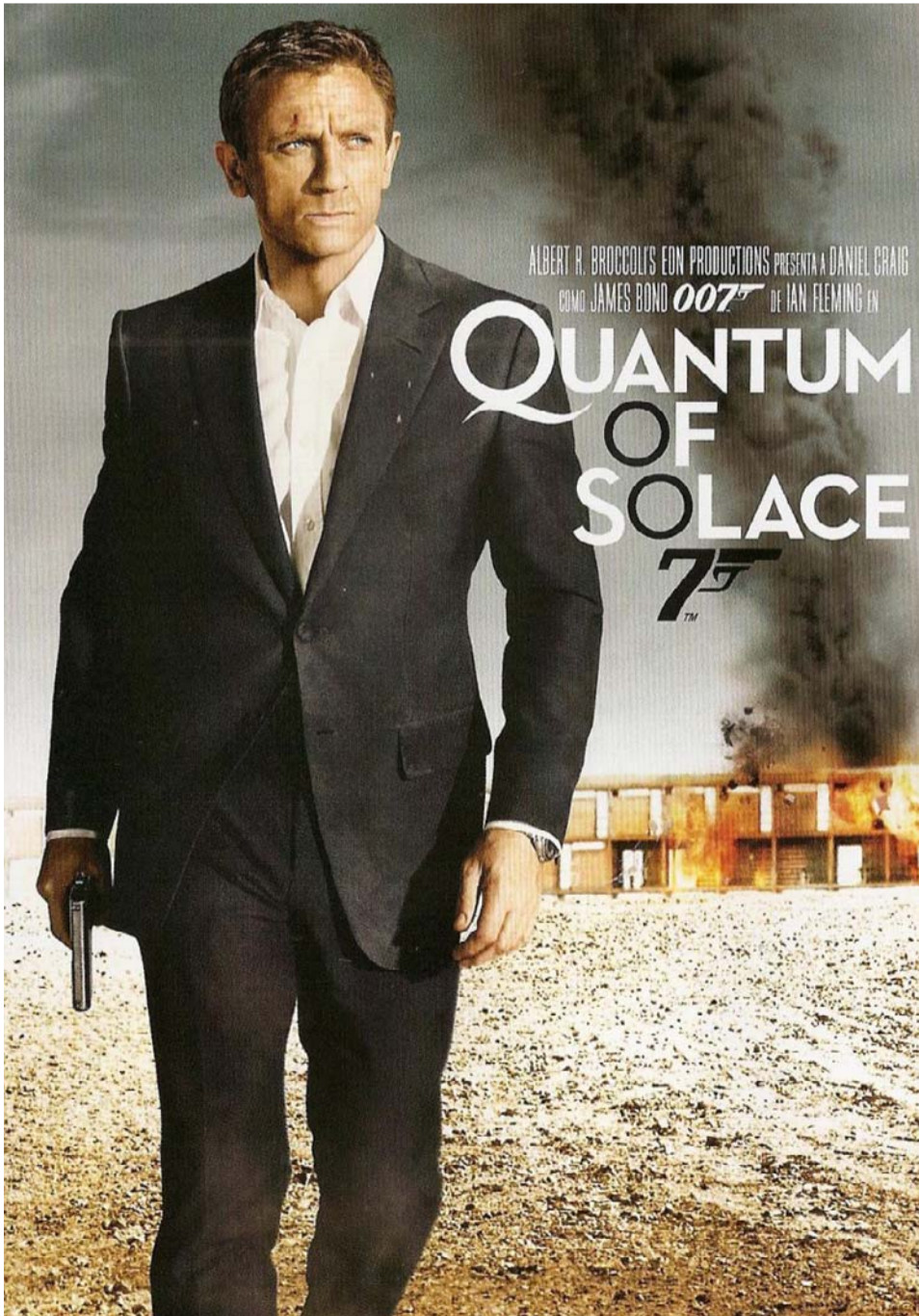
00:10 The Chase
 01:00 Emmerdale
 01:30 Coronation Street
 02:00 Coronation Street
 02:30 Couples Come Dine With Me
 03:25 Don't Tell The Bride
 04:25 The Jonathan Ross Show
 05:15 The Syndicate
 06:15 The Chase
 07:05 Couples Come Dine With Me
 08:00 Don't Tell The Bride
 09:00 The Jonathan Ross Show
 10:00 The Syndicate
 11:00 The Chase
 11:50 Couples Come Dine With Me
 12:45 Emmerdale
 13:15 Emmerdale
 13:45 Coronation Street
 14:15 The Chase
 15:10 Couples Come Dine With Me
 16:00 Don't Tell The Bride



00:20 Puma: Lion Of The Andes
 01:10 Bearhood
 02:00 Tiger On The Run
 02:50 Secrets Of The Wild
 03:45 Return Of The Lion
 04:40 Dangerous Encounters
 05:35 Tiger On The Run
 06:30 Secrets Of The Wild
 07:25 Return Of The Lion
 08:20 Dangerous Encounters
 09:15 World's Deadliest
 10:10 Wild Australia
 11:05 Return Of The Lion
 12:00 Amazon's Electric Fish
 12:55 Top Cats
 13:50 Secrets Of The Wild
 14:45 Wild 24
 15:40 Dangerous Encounters
 16:35 World's Deadliest
 17:30 Wild Colombia
 18:25 World's Deadliest Animals
 19:20 Wild 24
 20:10 Dangerous Encounters
 21:00 World's Deadliest
 21:50 Wild Colombia
 22:40 World's Deadliest Animals
 23:30 Amazon's Electric Fish



00:10 Ghosts Of Pearl Harbor
 01:00 Bugging Hitler's Army
 02:00 Locked Up Abroad
 02:55 Ultimate Airport Dubai
 03:50 Ghosts Of Pearl Harbor
 04:45 The Numbers Game
 05:40 Car SOS
 06:35 Classified: Terror/Counter Terror
 07:30 Dirty Rotten Survival
 08:25 Battleground Brothers
 09:20 The Numbers Game
 10:15 Locked Up Abroad
 11:10 The Border
 12:05 China To The World



QUANTUM OF SOLACE ON OSN MOVIES HD

- 13:00 Battleground Brothers
- 14:00 Mine Kings
- 15:00 Crimes Against Nature
- 16:00 Locked Up Abroad
- 17:00 The Border
- 18:00 Taboo USA
- 19:00 Miracle Hospital
- 19:30 Miracle Hospital
- 20:00 Locked Up Abroad
- 20:50 The Border
- 21:40 Taboo USA
- 22:30 Miracle Hospital
- 22:55 Miracle Hospital
- 23:20 Car SOS



- 00:15 Team Umizoomi
- 00:36 Louie
- 00:43 Louie
- 00:49 Olive The Ostrich
- 00:54 Olive The Ostrich
- 01:00 Max & Ruby
- 01:22 Wanda And The Alien
- 01:32 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
- 01:42 The Day Henry Met
- 01:47 The Day Henry Met
- 01:54 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 02:16 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 02:39 Zack & Quack
- 03:01 Team Umizoomi
- 03:23 Olive The Ostrich
- 03:28 Olive The Ostrich
- 03:32 Paw Patrol
- 03:55 Little Charmers
- 04:07 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
- 04:19 Dora The Explorer
- 04:41 Max & Ruby
- 05:06 Bubble Guppies
- 05:30 Shimmer And Shine
- 05:53 Dora And Friends
- 06:16 Zack & Quack
- 06:27 The Day Henry Met
- 06:32 The Day Henry Met
- 06:38 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 07:00 Paw Patrol
- 07:13 Paw Patrol
- 07:37 Dora The Explorer
- 08:00 Zack & Quack
- 08:22 Dora And Friends
- 08:46 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 09:10 Paw Patrol
- 09:35 Shimmer And Shine
- 09:58 Dora The Explorer
- 10:21 Paw Patrol
- 10:45 Little Charmers
- 10:57 Bubble Guppies
- 11:20 Fresh Beat Band Of Spies
- 11:40 Zack & Quack
- 11:52 Team Umizoomi
- 12:15 Team Umizoomi
- 12:38 Louie
- 12:45 Louie
- 12:53 Olive The Ostrich
- 12:58 Olive The Ostrich
- 13:03 Max & Ruby
- 13:26 Wanda And The Alien
- 13:35 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
- 13:46 The Day Henry Met
- 13:51 The Day Henry Met
- 13:57 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 14:19 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 14:41 Zack & Quack
- 15:03 Team Umizoomi
- 15:25 Olive The Ostrich
- 15:30 Olive The Ostrich
- 15:35 Paw Patrol
- 15:58 Little Charmers
- 16:10 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
- 16:22 Dora The Explorer
- 16:44 Max & Ruby
- 17:07 Bubble Guppies
- 17:31 Shimmer And Shine
- 17:54 Dora And Friends
- 18:17 Zack & Quack
- 18:29 The Day Henry Met
- 18:34 The Day Henry Met
- 18:38 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 19:00 Paw Patrol
- 19:13 Paw Patrol
- 19:37 Dora The Explorer
- 20:00 Zack & Quack
- 20:22 Dora And Friends
- 20:46 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 21:10 Paw Patrol
- 21:35 Shimmer And Shine
- 21:58 Dora The Explorer
- 22:21 Paw Patrol
- 22:45 Little Charmers
- 22:57 Bubble Guppies
- 23:20 Fresh Beat Band Of Spies
- 23:40 Zack & Quack
- 23:52 Team Umizoomi



THE MARK 2: REDEMPTION ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD



- 00:00 Son Of A Gun
- 02:00 The Borderlands
- 04:00 Beverly Hills Cop 3
- 06:00 Big Game
- 08:00 The Mark: Redemption
- 09:45 The Machine
- 11:30 Beverly Hills Cop 3
- 13:30 Divergent
- 16:00 Surrogates
- 17:45 Survivor
- 19:30 Fast & Furious 7
- 22:00 Terminator Genisys



- 01:15 Hannah Montana Movie
- 03:15 The Santa Clause 3
- 05:15 Underdog
- 07:00 Hercules (1997)
- 09:00 Chicken Little
- 10:45 Stitch! The Movie
- 12:00 Underdog
- 13:45 Chicken Little
- 15:30 Lilo & Stitch 2
- 17:00 Ghost Squad
- 19:00 The Lone Ranger
- 21:30 White Fang
- 23:30 Lilo & Stitch 2



- 00:00 The Babadook
- 02:00 Amelia
- 04:00 10 Things I Hate About You
- 06:00 Just Married
- 08:00 Ghostbusters II
- 10:00 Amelia
- 12:00 Quantum Of Solace
- 14:00 Hotel Transylvania 2
- 16:00 A Civil Action
- 18:00 Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps
- 20:15 Unstoppable
- 22:00 Focus
- 23:45 Jessabelle



- 00:00 Unfinished Business
- 02:00 Baby Mama
- 04:00 Pixels
- 06:00 Other Plans
- 08:00 Baby Mama
- 10:00 Pixels
- 12:00 Mr. Popper's Penguins
- 14:00 Outside Bet
- 16:00 Love, Rosie



- 18:00 Liberal Arts
- 20:00 It's Complicated
- 22:15 A Fantastic Fear Of Everything



- 01:00 Get On Up
- 03:30 WarGames
- 05:30 Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon
- 08:00 I Believe In Miracles
- 10:00 Get On Up
- 12:30 Star Wars: The Force Awakens
- 15:00 Interstellar
- 18:00 Boyhood
- 20:45 Whiplash
- 22:30 The Danish Girl



- 01:00 Marco Macaco
- 02:45 Pim And Pom: The Big Adventure
- 04:15 Barnyard
- 06:00 Baby Geniuses And The Mystery Of The Crown Jewels
- 07:45 The Heart Of The Oak
- 09:15 Baby Geniuses And The Space Baby
- 11:00 Marco Macaco
- 12:30 Pim And Pom: The Big Adventure
- 14:00 Jock The Hero Dog
- 16:00 Baby Geniuses And The Space Baby
- 18:00 Yellowbird
- 20:00 Rugrats Go Wild
- 21:45 Jock The Hero Dog



- 00:40 Mythbusters
- 01:30 How Do They Do It?
- 01:55 Food Factory
- 02:20 Food Factory USA
- 02:45 Food Factory USA
- 03:10 Close Encounters
- 03:35 Close Encounters
- 04:00 Kings Of Construction
- 04:48 Mythbusters
- 05:36 How Do They Do It?
- 06:00 Food Factory
- 06:24 Food Factory USA
- 06:49 Food Factory USA
- 07:12 Close Encounters
- 07:37 Close Encounters
- 08:00 How Do They Do It?
- 08:26 Kings Of Construction
- 09:14 Mythbusters
- 10:02 Close Encounters
- 10:27 Close Encounters

- 10:50 How Do They Do It?
- 11:14 Food Factory
- 11:38 Food Factory USA
- 12:26 Kings Of Construction
- 13:14 Mythbusters
- 14:02 How Do They Do It?
- 14:26 Food Factory
- 14:50 Close Encounters
- 15:15 Close Encounters
- 15:38 Food Factory USA
- 16:26 Kings Of Construction
- 17:14 Mythbusters
- 18:02 Close Encounters
- 18:27 Close Encounters
- 18:50 Kings Of Construction
- 19:40 Mythbusters
- 20:30 Mythbusters
- 21:20 How Do They Do It?
- 21:45 Food Factory
- 22:10 Close Encounters
- 22:35 Close Encounters



- 00:20 Oprah's Master Class
- 01:10 Single Dad Seeking...
- 02:00 My Big Fat Fabulous Life
- 02:25 Say Yes To The Dress
- 02:50 Love, Lust Or Run
- 03:15 Cake Boss
- 03:35 Oprah's Master Class
- 04:20 Little People, Big World: Big Changes
- 05:10 Toddlers & Tiaras
- 06:00 Little People, Big World
- 06:25 Little People, Big World
- 06:50 Little People, Big World
- 07:15 Little People, Big World
- 07:40 Little People, Big World
- 08:05 Little People, Big World
- 08:30 Little People, Big World
- 09:20 Sister Wives
- 10:10 Ultimate Shopper
- 11:00 Ultimate Shopper
- 11:50 Love, Lust Or Run
- 12:15 Love, Lust Or Run
- 12:40 Love, Lust Or Run
- 13:05 Love, Lust Or Run
- 13:30 Love, Lust Or Run
- 13:55 Oprah: Where Are They Now?
- 14:45 Oprah's Master Class
- 15:35 Cake Boss
- 16:00 Cake Boss
- 16:25 Cake Boss
- 16:50 Cake Boss
- 17:15 Cake Boss
- 17:40 Outrageous Kid Parties
- 18:05 Outrageous Kid Parties
- 18:30 Designer Darlings
- 19:20 Little People, Big World
- 20:10 Sister Wives
- 21:00 Little People, Big World
- 21:50 Sister Wives
- 22:40 Too Ugly For Love?
- 23:30 Return To Amish



- 00:00 The Universe: Ancient Mysteries Solved
- 01:00 Warriors
- 02:00 Ancient Discoveries
- 03:00 Missing In Alaska
- 03:50 Ancient Aliens
- 04:40 The Human Calculator
- 05:30 The Universe: Ancient Mysteries Solved
- 06:20 America: The Story Of The U.S.
- 07:10 The Universe
- 08:00 Ancient Discoveries
- 09:00 Missing In Alaska
- 10:00 Ancient Aliens
- 11:00 The Human Calculator
- 12:00 The Universe: Ancient Mysteries Solved
- 13:00 America: The Story Of The U.S.
- 14:00 Ancient Discoveries
- 15:00 Missing In Alaska

- 16:00 Ancient Aliens
- 17:00 The Human Calculator
- 18:00 The Universe: Ancient Mysteries Solved
- 19:00 America: The Story Of The U.S.
- 20:00 Ancient Discoveries
- 21:00 Missing In Alaska



- 00:20 Time Team
- 01:10 Outlaw Chronicles: Hells Angels
- 02:00 Search For The Lost Giants
- 02:50 Storage Wars
- 03:15 American Pickers
- 04:05 Pawn Stars
- 05:00 Mountain Men
- 06:00 Mankind The Story Of All Of Us
- 06:50 Gold Hunters: Legend Of The Superstition...
- 07:40 Billion Dollar Wreck
- 08:30 Shark Wranglers
- 09:20 Ice Road Truckers
- 10:10 Pawn Stars South Africa
- 11:00 American Pickers
- 11:50 Hunting Hitler
- 18:30 Hunting Hitler: Inside The Investigation
- 19:20 Alaska Off-Road Warriors
- 20:10 Ice Road Truckers
- 21:00 American Pickers
- 21:50 Ronnie O'Sullivan's American Hustle
- 22:40 Forged In Fire
- 23:30 The Curse Of Oak Island



- 00:00 Patricia Heaton Parties
- 01:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 02:00 Man Fire Food
- 03:00 Chopped
- 04:00 Guy's Grocery Games
- 05:00 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
- 05:30 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
- 06:00 The Kitchen
- 07:00 The Pioneer Woman
- 08:00 Siba's Table: Fast Feasts
- 09:00 Anna Olson: Bake
- 10:00 The Kitchen
- 11:00 The Pioneer Woman
- 12:00 Siba's Table
- 13:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 14:00 Chopped
- 15:00 The Kitchen
- 16:00 Anna Olson: Bake
- 17:00 Chopped
- 18:00 Guy's Grocery Games
- 19:00 Luke Nguyen's United Kingdom
- 19:30 Luke Nguyen's United Kingdom

I BELIEVE IN MIRACLES



I BELIEVE IN MIRACLES ON OSN MOVIES FESTIVAL HD

MUMBAI'S ORIGINAL INHABITANTS FEAR WORLD'S TALLEST STATUE

MUMBAI: A fitting tribute to a local legend or a grotesque misuse of money? The decision to build the world's tallest statue just off Mumbai's coast has divided the city. But the traditional Koli community, who depend on fishing for their livelihoods, fear they will be worst hit by the construction, warning that it threatens their centuries-old existence. India will spend 36 billion rupees (\$530 million) on the controversial memorial to 17th century Hindu warrior king Chhatrapati Shivaji. Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone in December.

At 190 meters it will be twice the height of America's Statue of Liberty and almost 40 metres taller than the world's current tallest memorial—a statue of Buddha in China. The Koli fishing community, Mumbai's original inhabitants and whose goddess "Mumbadevi" lends her name to the city, say the decision to build it on a rocky outcrop a couple of kilometers off the coast will sound the death knell for their traditional way of life. "The breeding ground for fish will be completely destroyed," Krishna Tandel tells AFP, unfurling a net at Machhimar Nagar bay, which is tucked behind the high-rises of Mumbai's southern financial district.

The project has divided India's commercial capital and highlights a political obsession with statues in the country as parties seek to appeal to regional identities with ever greater effigies of historical figures. Supporters say the memorial is a fitting tribute to someone many locals consider a hero of Maharashtra state, of which Mumbai is the capital. Shivaji fought the Muslim Mughal empire, is revered by the Maratha caste and trumpeted by Hindu nationalist politicians. Opponents insist it is

a gross waste of money which would be better spent on improving health, education and infrastructure in the teeming metropolis of more than 20 million people.

Environmental destruction

A petition on the change.org website opposing the bronze statue, which will

of fish to sell at markets and feed their families. Residents say disruption caused by construction will decimate their fishing stocks—including pomfret, Bombay mackerel, seer fish, prawns, and crabs—while heavy traffic ferrying tourists from three terminals will block access to the sea and disrupt wave patterns.



MUMBAI: Indian fishermen from the Koli community get off their boat onto a hand-made polystyrene dinghy to come ashore in Mumbai. A fitting tribute to a local legend or a grotesque misuse of money? The decision to build the world's tallest statue on Mumbai's shores has left the city divided. But the traditional Koli community, who depend on fishing for their livelihoods, fear the construction threatens their centuries-old existence. — AFP

depict Shivaji brandishing a sword while charging on a horse, has received almost 43,000 signatures. Some 2,000 fishermen, many of whom live in shanties surrounding Machhimar Nagar, operate 350 boats out of the picturesque cove, catching a melange

"We have been fishing for generations. It is our business and now our livelihoods are at stake," 32-year-old Tandel says, demanding the statue be built on land. Environmentalists agree that the project, which is due to be completed by 2021, will

cause immense harm to a vibrant marine ecosystem. "There's a huge diversity of fish, fauna and invertebrates there. Fish catches, sewage, and tidal currents will change," wildlife biologist Anand Pendharkar said. "It's going to affect the food base of the city, it's going to affect the economy. There is going to be a huge amount of damage."

Critics question why Mumbai needs such a lavish statue when the city already has several smaller Shivaji memorials. The city's airport, main train station and museum are named after the Hindu hero while there is also a Shivaji Park. IndiaSpend, a non-profit data journalism website, estimates that a micro-irrigation project could provide water to thousands of farmers in the drought-prone state for the cost of building the statue. For the same sum, dozens of decaying Shivaji-era forts could be restored instead, it says.

India's 'Statue of Liberty'

The Bharatiya Janata Party-led Maharashtra government, in coalition with Shiv Sena, which means "Shivaji's Army", dismiss environmental concerns and say the project will draw 10,000 visitors every day. Shaina NC, a spokeswoman for the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, claims it will be an "iconic" memorial akin to the Statue of Liberty that will make its money back through tourism. Shiv Sena spokesman Sanjay Raut says the sea is the best site because Shivaji created India's first navy. The development comes as the BJP government in neighboring Gujarat builds a 182-metre statue to Vallabhbhai Patel, a former Indian statesman who was one of the senior figures in the country's independence movement and an icon of the Congress Party.— AFP

CLINIC
PAGE



Kuwait Times
THE LEADING INDEPENDENT DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF

Dr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem
فهد علي المخيزيم

Consultant Pediatrician استشاري أطفال
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KNCC PROGRAMME FROM THURSDAY TO WEDNESDAY (23/02/2017 TO 01/03/2017)

SHARQIA-1		THE WORTHY - Arabic	4:15 PM
A DOG'S PURPOSE	12:00 PM	THE WORTHY - Arabic	6:30 PM
A DOG'S PURPOSE	2:00 PM	WINNER- Telugu	6:30 PM
ELIMINATORS	4:00 PM	THE WORTHY - Arabic	9:30 PM
HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film	6:00 PM	EL QERD BEYETKALIM-Arabic	11:45 PM
A DOG'S PURPOSE	7:30 PM		
HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film	9:30 PM	MARINA-1	
ELIMINATORS	11:00 PM	ELIMINATORS	1:00 PM
ELIMINATORS	1:00 AM	A DOG'S PURPOSE	3:15 PM
		A DOG'S PURPOSE	5:30 PM
SHARQIA-2		A DOG'S PURPOSE	7:45 PM
HIDDEN FIGURES	12:00 PM	ELIMINATORS	10:00 PM
HIDDEN FIGURES	2:30 PM	ELIMINATORS	12:05 AM
THE WORTHY - Arabic	5:00 PM		
HIDDEN FIGURES	7:15 PM	MARINA-2	
THE WORTHY - Arabic	9:45 PM	HIDDEN FIGURES	1:00 PM
HIDDEN FIGURES	12:05 AM	THE DEVIL'S CANDY	1:45 PM
		HIDDEN FIGURES	3:30 PM
SHARQIA-3		HIDDEN FIGURES	6:00 PM
ROCK DOG	1:00 PM	HIDDEN FIGURES	8:30 PM
ROCK DOG	3:00 PM	THE DEVIL'S CANDY	11:00 PM
ROCK DOG	5:00 PM	THE DEVIL'S CANDY	12:45 AM
MERCURY PLAINS	7:00 PM		
THE DEVIL'S CANDY	9:00 PM	MARINA-3	
MERCURY PLAINS	10:45 PM	ROCK DOG	12:00 PM
THE DEVIL'S CANDY	12:45 AM	ROCK DOG	2:00 PM
		ROCK DOG	4:00 PM
MUHALAB-1		ROCK DOG	6:00 PM
ROCK DOG	12:45 PM	THE WORTHY - Arabic	8:00 PM
ROCK DOG	2:45 PM	THE WORTHY - Arabic	11:15 PM
ROCK DOG	4:45 PM	THE WORTHY - Arabic	12:30 AM
RANGOON - Hindi	6:45 PM		
MERCURY PLAINS	9:45 PM	AVENUES-1	
MERCURY PLAINS	11:45 PM	A DOG'S PURPOSE	12:45 PM
		A DOG'S PURPOSE	3:00 PM
MUHALAB-2		A DOG'S PURPOSE	5:15 PM
A DOG'S PURPOSE	1:00 PM	A DOG'S PURPOSE	7:30 PM
A DOG'S PURPOSE	1:30 PM	A DOG'S PURPOSE	9:45 PM
A DOG'S PURPOSE	3:00 PM	WINNER- Telugu	3:45 PM
A DOG'S PURPOSE	5:00 PM	WINNER- Telugu	6:45 PM
WINNER- Telugu	4:00 PM	WINNER- Telugu	9:45 PM
KAABIL - HINDI	7:00 PM	SPLIT	12:45 AM
WINNER - Telugu	7:00 PM		
THE DEVIL'S CANDY	10:00 PM	AVENUES-2	
WINNER - Telugu	10:00 PM	JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2 - 2D-4DX	12:15 PM
THE DEVIL'S CANDY	1:00 AM	THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE - 3D-4DX	2:45 PM
		THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE - 3D-4DX	5:00 PM
MUHALAB-3		THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE - 3D-4DX	7:15 PM
HIDDEN FIGURES	12:30 PM	JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2 - 2D-4DX	9:30 PM
HIDDEN FIGURES	3:00 PM	JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2 - 2D-4DX	12:05 AM
HIDDEN FIGURES	5:30 PM		
THE WORTHY - Arabic	8:00 PM	AVENUES-3	
HIDDEN FIGURES	10:15 PM	MERCURY PLAINS	12:15 PM
THE WORTHY - Arabic	12:45 AM	MERCURY PLAINS	2:30 PM
		MERCURY PLAINS	4:45 PM
FANAR-1		MERCURY PLAINS	7:00 PM
ROCK DOG	1:00 PM	MERCURY PLAINS	9:15 PM
ROCK DOG	3:00 PM	MERCURY PLAINS	11:30 PM
ROCK DOG	5:00 PM		
EL QERD BEYETKALIM-Arabic	7:00 PM	360°- 1	
HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film	9:00 PM	THE WORTHY - Arabic	12:30 PM
THE DEVIL'S CANDY	10:30 PM	THE WORTHY - Arabic	2:45 PM
THE DEVIL'S CANDY	12:15 AM	THE WORTHY - Arabic	5:00 PM
		THE WORTHY - Arabic	7:15 PM
FANAR-2		THE WORTHY - Arabic	9:30 PM
A DOG'S PURPOSE	12:30 PM	THE WORTHY - Arabic	11:45 PM
ELIMINATORS	2:45 PM		
HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film	5:00 PM	360°- 2	
A DOG'S PURPOSE	6:30 PM	SPLIT	1:30 PM
A DOG'S PURPOSE	8:45 PM	KAABIL - HINDI	4:00 PM
ELIMINATORS	11:00 PM	RANGOON - Hindi	6:45 PM
ELIMINATORS	1:00 AM	RANGOON - Hindi	9:45 PM
		SPLIT	12:45 AM
FANAR-3			
RANGOON - Hindi	1:00 PM	360°- 3	
MERCURY PLAINS	2:00 PM	ROCK DOG	12:15 PM
FRI		ROCK DOG	2:15 PM
MERCURY PLAINS	4:00 PM	HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film	4:45 PM
RANGOON - Hindi	6:00 PM	HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film	6:30 PM
MERCURY PLAINS	9:00 PM	HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film	8:15 PM
MERCURY PLAINS	11:00 PM	HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film	10:00 PM
MERCURY PLAINS	1:00 AM	HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film	11:45 PM
FANAR-4		AL-KOUT.1	
HIDDEN FIGURES	12:15 PM	ROCK DOG	11:30 AM
HIDDEN FIGURES	2:45 PM	ROCK DOG	1:30 PM
HIDDEN FIGURES	5:15 PM	ROCK DOG	3:30 PM
HIDDEN FIGURES	7:45 PM	ROCK DOG	5:30 PM
HIDDEN FIGURES	10:15 PM	THE WORTHY - Arabic	7:30 PM
HIDDEN FIGURES	12:45 AM	THE WORTHY - Arabic	9:45 PM
		THE WORTHY - Arabic	12:05 AM
FANAR-5		AL-KOUT.2	
THE WORTHY - Arabic	11:45 AM	THE DEVIL'S CANDY	12:30 PM
THE WORTHY - Arabic	2:00 PM	THE DEVIL'S CANDY	2:30 PM

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PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr: 05:00
Shorook 06:19
Duhr: 12:02
Asr: 15:14
Maghrib: 17:39
Isha: 18:56



Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381

Friday Times BUSINESS

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2017



Breakthroughs take backseat in upcoming Apple iPhone launch

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STOCK MARKETS STRUGGLE AS TRUMP RALLY HITS BUFFERS



RAS LAFFAN: This file photo taken on February 06, 2017 shows the Ras Laffan Industrial City, Qatar's principal site for production of liquefied natural gas and gas-to-liquid, some 80 kilometers north of the capital Doha. — AFP

INSIDE QATAR'S 'GAS CAPITAL OF THE WORLD'

ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT INDUSTRIAL SITES ON THE PLANET

RAS LAFFAN: Perched on a northern tip of Qatar, about an hour's drive from the gleaming capital Doha and at the end of "Route 77" stands the secretive city of Ras Laffan. Behind its closely guarded gates, Ras Laffan is home to 30,000 people, the best white truffles in Qatar, apparently, and a turtle conservation project. It is also one of the most significant industrial sites on the planet.

"Welcome to the gas capital of the world," says our guide Wissam, as he ushers a small group of journalists into Ras Laffan on a rare government-invited press tour of the site. He is not exaggerating. Ras Laffan is Qatar's port for the production and export of liquefied natural gas, an industrial process whereby gas is cooled to -162 degrees Celsius (-260 Fahrenheit), allowing it to be more easily shipped around the world.

The LNG comes from the huge North Field, 80 kilometers further north of Ras Laffan, a 6,000 square kilometer site in Gulf waters, almost half the size of Qatar itself. Since the first shipment sailed to Japan in

1997, Qatar now produces up to 77 million tonnes of gas each year. In context, a study by Royal Dutch Shell published this month said worldwide demand reached 265 million tons in 2016.

Using those figures, tiny Qatar is responsible for 30 percent of the global LNG market. Qatar's annual volume of production not only gave its name to the road that leads to Ras Laffan, but ensures its position as the world's biggest LNG exporter. "We will remain for a long time the leader in LNG," says Saad al-Kaabi, the head of state-owned energy giant Qatar Petroleum, which owns and operates Ras Laffan.

Qatar's gas reserves are so vast it can maintain production at current rates for another 137 years. It is from Ras Laffan that Qatar's unimaginable wealth has been forged. In 1997, Qatar's exports were valued at around \$5 billion. Many million tonnes of LNG later, that figure reached \$125 billion by 2014, according to trade data site the Observatory of Economic Complexity.

World Bank figures show that Qatar's gross domestic product was about \$11 billion in 1997 and \$165 billion in 2015. In short, Ras Laffan is the reason why there are so many skyscrapers in Doha, why Qatar has an award-winning airport and airline, why Paris Saint-Germain have won four Ligue 1 titles in a row, why Britain has a new tallest building and why the emirate will host the 2022 football World Cup.

Like a James Bond set

Normally Ras Laffan remains firmly out of bounds but, for a few hours at least, the curtain has been partially lifted on the huge refinery. Security though remains tight. Video is not allowed and pictures are only permitted on one part of the tour.

The visit is conducted almost exclusively by coach. It is not a place to break rules. Workers, culled from 54 different countries, who breach a speed limit on a Ras Laffan road can be instantly sacked. And as rarely as anyone is let in, no ship's crew member is allowed

out when their boats are being loaded with LNG, a process that can take 24 hours.

Qatar is a largely secretive country but commercial and security reasons could also lay behind its reluctance to show off Ras Laffan. The site has the feel of a vast James Bond film set. It is a metal forest of huge pipes, loading arms, holders, tank farms, cooling systems, docks, ships and "trains that don't move"—where the natural gas is converted into LNG.

There are also five fire stations, workers' accommodation and, more surprisingly, somewhere in this vast complex is a picnic area. Above everything, flare stack flames burn constantly into the blue sky. After a brief stop inside Ras Laffan, it is back on the coach and through the guarded gates as the curtain falls back down. Within minutes of travelling back down "Route 77", the coach passes a goat herder, a symbol of the country's past. In the vehicle's mirrors, Ras Laffan's flames can still be seen burning, a symbol of Qatar's present and future. — AFP

EGYPT REAL ESTATE DEVELOPERS SUSPENDS SAUDI GOVT PROJECT

CAIRO: Three Egyptian real estate executives said yesterday that their companies have suspended housing deals with the Saudi Arabian government amid political tensions between the two countries. Four Egyptian real estate companies had signed memorandums of understanding with the Saudi Housing Ministry during King Salman's April visit to Cairo last year. Since then, political differences have emerged as the two Arab powers have diverged on the conflict in Syria, and an Egyptian court blocked the transfer of two Red Sea islands to Saudi Arabia which Cairo had agreed during Salman's visit.

Al Ahly for Real Estate Development, Talaat Mostafa Group, Misr Italia, and Orbit Group were to build housing units in Saudi Arabia. Details of the deals were not clear, but local media had said each firm would build between 10,000 to 15,000 units. "We suspended the agreement with the Saudi Housing Ministry despite all project studies being concluded because of worries over tensions between Egypt and Saudi Arabia," Al Ahly for Real Estate Development Chairman Hussein Sabour told Reuters.

Misr Italia Deputy Chairman Mohamed Al-Assal said his company was no longer in contact with Saudi Arabia over the deal. "The

agreement was cancelled due to a lack of cooperation from the Saudi side and a breakdown in communications between both sides since last June," he told Reuters. Orbit Group also told Reuters its agreement with Saudi Arabia was suspended but declined to provide details. Talaat Mostafa Group has not said that it has suspended work, and did not respond to requests for comment. Officials from the Saudi foreign and housing ministries did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Signs of political disagreements between Egypt and Saudi Arabia became apparent months after the two countries signed vari-

ous agreements worth \$22.6 billion during Salman's visit in April. Saudi Arabia's state oil firm Aramco halted shipments of oil products to Egypt in October without providing reasons. Egypt voted in favor of a Russian-backed UN resolution on Syria in October that excluded calls to stop bombing Aleppo, which Saudi Arabia strongly opposed.

An Egyptian court rejected last month a government plan to transfer two uninhabited Red Sea islands to Saudi Arabia, a final ruling that deepened tensions between the Arab World's most populous state and its richest. Officials from both countries deny the existence of tensions or disagreements. —Reuters

AIRTEL TO BUY TELENOR'S INDIA ARM FOR JIO FIGHT

MUMBAI: Indian telecom giant Bharti Airtel will buy the local operations of Norway's Telenor, it said yesterday, as the ultra-competitive mobile market is shaken up by the country's richest man. Tycoon Mukesh Ambani launched Reliance Jio's 4G network in September with an audacious free service for the rest of 2016, followed by vastly cheaper data plans and free voice calls for life.

The move forced rivals to slash their tariffs and scramble to match the deep pockets of Jio, which is backed by Ambani's vast energy-to-chemicals conglomerate Reliance Industries and picked up 100 million subscribers in its first six months. Bharti's acquisition is the latest movement towards consolidation in India's telecoms sector as major players try to position themselves to best face the tough new environment.

The move, which still needs to be approved by regulators, will enhance its coverage, the company said in a statement to the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE), and see Telenor exit India. "The proposed acquisition will include transfer of all of Telenor India's assets and customers, further augmenting Airtel's overall base and network," the Indian firm said in the statement.

Last month British mobile phone behemoth Vodafone announced that it was in talks to merge its Indian unit with Mumbai-based Idea Cellular in its own move to counter Jio's rise. That deal would create India's largest telecoms company. Global brokerage firm CLSA estimated that the pair would command a combined 43 percent share of market revenue, ahead of Airtel, which is currently the market leader, on 33 percent.

Reliance Communications-owned by Ambani's brother Anil Ambani and Tata Teleservices, part of the sprawling salt-to-steel Tata conglomerate, are also reportedly in talks to join forces. Reliance merged with telecom operator Airtel in September last year. Bharti Airtel's shares surged more than five percent in Mumbai morning trade following the Telenor deal announcement.

"The decision to exit India has not been taken lightly," Sigve Brekke, Telenor Group CEO, said in the statement. "After thorough consideration, it is our view that the significant investments needed to secure Telenor India's future business on a standalone basis will not give an acceptable level of return," he added. Telecoms analyst Baburajan Kizhakedath said Telenor was quitting India because the intense competition meant there was no scope for growth. "The Airtel-Telenor deal is probably the best exit route for Telenor," he said. — AFP



LONDON: This is a Tuesday, March 1, 2016 file photo of the sign on a branch of Barclays Bank. — AP

BARCLAYS RETURNS TO PROFIT

CORE BUSINESSES ARE PERFORMING WELL

LONDON: British bank Barclays returned to profit in 2016 after slashing provisions set aside for legal and compensation costs linked to foreign exchange and insurance scandals, it said yesterday. Chief executive Jes Staley saluted the performance of core operations in the UK and abroad and said the bank would complete a restructuring program faster than expected.

Barclays said it plans to shut down its non-core division six months earlier than planned, on June 30. Amid talk of banks switching operations out of the UK owing to Brexit, Staley told reporters on a call that London was set to remain Europe's financial centre. Barclays reported annual net profit of £1.62 billion (\$2.0 billion, 1.92 billion euros) compared with a loss after tax of £394 million in 2015, it said in an earnings statement.

The bank set aside no amount at all in 2016 for "ongoing investigations and litigation including foreign exchange",

whereas it had taken a hit of more than £1.0 billion relating to the matters in 2015. Barclays did provide £1.0 billion last year to compensate customers who were mis-sold a UK insurance product, although this was substantially lower compared with 2015. Regarding day-to-day operations, Staley said that the bank's core businesses were performing well, with pre-tax profits up four percent to £6.4 billion.

'Restructuring'

US national Staley joined the bank in December 2015, and was tasked with restoring Barclays' battered reputation following a series of high-profile scandals, including the rigging of foreign exchange and Libor interest rate markets. "A year ago we laid out our intention to accelerate the restructuring of Barclays and refocus our business as a transatlantic, consumer, corporate and investment bank, anchored in London and New York," Staley said in

yesterday's statement.

"We are now just months away from completing the restructuring of Barclays, and I am more optimistic than ever for our prospects in 2017, and beyond," he added. Later speaking to reporters, Staley pointed to the UK's solid economic performance ahead of Brexit, while insisting that "London will continue to be the financial centre for Europe". He added: "Obviously banks need to think about contingency during this period of uncertainty... We are looking at contingencies."

Investors welcomed Barclays' updates, sending its share price rising 3.1 percent to 242.50 pence in morning deals on London's FTSE 100 index, which dipped overall. "Barclays is in better shape than it was, and the accelerated timetable for the run-down of its non-core assets will be received positively by the market," said Laith Khalaf, senior analyst at stockbroker Hargreaves Lansdown. — AFP

IVANKA TRUMP VISITS CENTER FOR MINORITY-OWNED BUSINESSES

WASHINGTON: Ivanka Trump is learning more about economic policy as she takes on a more visible role in and around Washington. On Wednesday, the first daughter visited the Raymond V Haysbert Center for Entrepreneurship at the Greater Baltimore Urban League, where she participated in a roundtable discussion with minority business owners, mostly from the Baltimore area.

National Urban League President Marc Morial invited Trump, who has stressed her interest in working on policies to benefit women in business. He said he wanted to show her "a highly successful program that is supported by the federal government that makes a difference in the success of small entrepreneurs." "I feel like Ivanka listened very intently and asked some very intelligent questions," Morial said, noting that she wanted to understand which programs worked and could be implemented on a larger scale.

During the roundtable, the business owners shared stories about the challenges they had overcome to achieve their business goals - two said they had previously been homeless - and discussed the public and private programs that helped them achieve, according to a White House official who requested anonymity to provide details of the event.

Morial said there are about a dozen National Urban League entrepreneurship centers operated by local affiliates around the country. Collectively they serve about 10,000 people a year and are supported by public and private funding. Also participating in the roundtable were Linda McMahon, who heads the Small Business Administration, and Dina Powell, an assistant to the president and senior counselor for economic initiatives.

Morial, who has been critical of President Donald Trump, said he was happy to reach out to Ivanka Trump over a shared interest in economic develop-

ment. "We will oppose those things that we are duty bound to oppose, but we will keep our doors open to look for areas of commonality," he said. "I call it an intelligent approach."

Trump stepped away from leadership roles at the family business and her own lifestyle brand to move her family to Washington. For now, her husband, Jared Kushner, is the only one with an official White House position, but she has been an increasingly visible presence in recent weeks, appearing at meetings and press conferences. Her most high-profile outing to date was a meeting on women's economic issues that came as part of Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's visit to the White House. Trudeau's office proposed the joint effort focused on empowering women in the workforce, and the meeting was put together by aides in both countries with input from Ivanka Trump. Female executives from both countries attended, as did the president and Trudeau.

TRUMP WARNED AGAINST DISTORTED TRADE DATA

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump has reportedly ordered a change to the US trade deficit calculations to bolster his argument against trade deals, but analysts say this could undermine a key economic indicator. The news follows other reports that the Trump team also has directed career staffers at the White House to engineer unusually rosy growth and revenue forecasts to support ambitious budget proposals from the new administration. These moves have stoked fears about the credibility of economic data under Trump.

Over their objections, officials at the office of the US Trade Representative's office last week produced new trade balance data using a methodology that exaggerates deficits with key US trading partners such as Mexico, The Wall Street Journal reported Sunday. The picture of yawning trade gaps could help Trump's stance that the US is getting the short end of the stick in free trade deals. Trump repeatedly has vowed to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement with Canada and Mexico - which he has called a "disaster" - and senior US officials are in Mexico this week for meetings at which trade is one item on the agenda.

The alternate trade data - intended for consumption on Capitol Hill, according to The Journal - could help the Trump administration garner support among lawmakers for what he says is the need to renegotiate those trade pacts. At issue in the new trade figures is the question of "re-exports," or imported goods which transit the United States on their way to be sold in a third country. By excluding those goods from the tally of US exports, but keeping them in the calculation of imports, trade deficits would appear to be much larger than the official data indicate.

'Nonsense data'

Alan Deardorff, professor of international economics at the University of Michigan, said altering the data - which is calculated in a common format in many countries - is problematic. He told AFP that "excluding re-exports from exports but not from imports would create nonsense data."

"If all countries were to do that, then international trade data for the world would have far more imports than exports," he said. Former US treasury secretary Larry Summers, who worked under the Clinton administration, warned that manipulating statistics for political advantage would spur protectionism.

Trump's alternate method would be "Dumb, dishonest and dangerous," Summers wrote on Twitter. "Dumb because if imports subtract, why don't exports add to trade surplus?" he tweeted, adding, "A re-export is just a negative import." Jeannine Aversa, spokeswoman for the Commerce Department's Bureau of Economic Analysis, told AFP that the agency counts re-exports when calculating exports and imports.

And there are currently no proposed changes to BEA methodology, she said. Some lawmakers and critics of the current way of calculating deficits say excluding re-exports could be more accurate. Lori Wallach, head of the Global Trade Watch at the progressive organization Public Citizen, said counting only US-produced exports would nearly double the 2015 US trade deficit with Mexico to \$109 billion from \$60 billion. —AFP



TOKYO: A man walks past an electronic stock indicator of a securities firm. — AP

STOCK MARKETS STRUGGLE AS TRUMP RALLY HITS BUFFERS

'MARKETS APPEAR TO BE CAUGHT IN LIMBO'

PARIS: Global markets struggled to find clear direction yesterday as their recent strong run sparked by Donald Trump's election ran out of steam and investors digested a fresh batch of European corporate earnings reports and minutes from the US Federal Reserve. In London and Frankfurt, stock prices were slightly lower, while the French blue-chip CAC40 index edged higher.

"Markets appear to be caught in limbo, with European equities mixed and US futures pointing to a similar open on Wall Street," said Oanda analyst Craig Erlam. Asian markets had ended the session lower as the recent Trump rally that has inflated global stocks since the beginning of the year finally appeared to have hit the buffers.

The day before, New York's Dow index had racked up a ninth successive all-time high, but analysts said there was a sense that the advance may have gone too far. The dollar picked up slightly but was unable fully to bounce back from Wednesday's sell-off after minutes from

the Federal Reserve's latest board meeting showed policymakers expect a rate hike "fairly soon" but also see increases being gradual. The minutes pointed to "heightened uncertainty" about possible US policies that could lift inflation, hastening the need for rate hikes. But that was not enough for dealers who had hoped for firmer guidance.

US Federal Reserve 'disappoints'

"The minutes of the Federal Open Market Committee ... were hardly a surprise but they did disappoint investors who had been hoping, perhaps unrealistically, that they would hint at a rate increase next month. They didn't, so the dollar retreated," said analysts at MoneyCorp in a note.

In Europe, a flurry of different corporate earnings reports included British bank Barclays said it had returned to profit after slashing provisions set aside for legal and compensation costs linked to foreign exchange and insurance scandals. Its shares gained two percent to

£2.40 in a generally weaker market. The heavily-indebted Spanish telecoms giant Telefonica said its net profit was hit by restructuring costs linked to a voluntary redundancy scheme. But investors were unfazed and the group's shares added 2.2 percent.

World markets and the dollar have been on an upward trajectory since Trump's November US election win betting his big-spending, tax-cutting plans will fire the US and global economy. But Greg McKenna, chief market strategist at CFD and FX provider AxiTrader, said there appears to be some scepticism of the likely effectiveness of Trumponomics as well as worries from some hedge funds that any big news has been priced in.

He added that there were an increasing number of investors betting on a retreat. In Tokyo the Nikkei index ended flat as the dollar dragged on exporters but having pared sharper morning losses. News that Nissan chief executive Carlos Ghosn would resign his post weighed on the carmaker, sending it down 0.6 percent. — AFP

PEUGEOT EYES 'CHAMPION' RANK WITH OPEL TAKEOVER

PARIS: PSA said yesterday its takeover of Opel would create a "European champion" in the auto industry, as the French carmaker pursued its acquisition plans armed with soaring fresh profit numbers. PSA, which owns the Peugeot and Citroen brands, said net profit for 2016 nearly doubled as the group pushes plans to buy General Motors' European brands Opel and Vauxhall.

Chief executive Carlos Tavares said the bid to acquire GM's European brands presented an "opportunity to create a European automobile champion". Net profit for the full year rose 79 percent to 2.15 billion euros (\$2.27 billion) with the auto giant

pledging to pay shareholder dividends for the first time since 2011 to the tune of 0.48 euros per share.

If the planned takeover is successful, it would see PSA regaining its position as the second-biggest car manufacturer in Europe after Germany's Volkswagen group. That position is currently held by rival French automaker Renault.

PSA would help Opel get back into the black and put the struggling German carmaker "back on its feet," Tavares told a news conference. The proposed move has sparked fears in Germany and Britain, which is home to its sister brand Vauxhall, that

non-French jobs could be axed if the deal goes ahead, although Tavares repeated assurances that Opel would remain "a German company".

And PSA would respect existing social agreements at the firm, including keeping jobs in the short term, which was a "moral" question and one of trust, he said, insisting the company would seek to build a partnership with "the employees, the unions and the government" in Germany.

PSA has been active in trying to win backing for the acquisition, with Tavares on Wednesday securing the backing of Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel. He

also held a phone conversation with British Prime Minister Theresa May, pledging to "develop" the Vauxhall brand if the takeover plans succeed.

Founded in 1862, Opel, with its lightning-bolt emblem, has long been a familiar sight on German and European roads. But in recent years the firm has booked repeated losses, costing Detroit-based GM around \$15 billion (14 billion euros) since 2000. It operates some 10 factories in Europe spread across six countries and had 35,600 employees at the end of 2015 — 18,250 of them in Germany. In Britain, it sells vehicles under the Vauxhall brand. — AFP



DETROIT: In this photo provided by General Motors a self-driving car is seen. — AP

INFLUENCE GAME: GM BILL IS BOTH SELF-DRIVING AND SELF-INTERESTED

POTENTIALLY KEEPING ITS COMPETITORS OFF THE ROAD

WASHINGTON: With states seizing the initiative on shaping the future of self-driving cars, General Motors is trying to persuade legislators across the country to approve rules that would benefit the automaker while potentially keeping its competitors off the road.

The carmaker denies trying to freeze out other brands, but legislators in four states say GM lobbyists asked them to sponsor bills that the company's competitors contend would do just that. The bills set a blueprint for fully self-driving cars that are part of on-demand, ride-sharing fleets, but only those owned by an automaker. Competitors working on self-driving technology like Uber and Alphabet's Waymo fear the measures could shut out their companies because they don't manufacture cars. And some automakers that are developing autonomous cars say they could be shut out, too, because their vehicles still rely on having a driver. GM began by getting a bill passed last year on its home turf, in Michigan. In response to complaints from Waymo, a compromise bill was also passed to allow participation by technology companies. But Bryant Walker Smith,

a leading legal expert on self-driving cars, said the compromise was poorly worded, and it's unclear what it would do.

This year, bills similar to the Michigan law, but without the compromise language, have been introduced in at least five states: Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts and Tennessee. GM lobbyists have also urged lawmakers in other states to introduce versions of the bill. Prospects for passage of the bills are uncertain. But the state-by-state lobbying by the powerful automaker and its competitors shine light on the behind-the-scenes fight to determine how self-driving cars will operate on American roads and which companies will have the competitive edge.

Benefits of technology

With no federal regulations for self-driving cars in place, states are assuming responsibility for ensuring the benefits of the technology can be reaped without sacrificing safety. Federal regulators provided safety guidance to states and automakers last year, but stopped short of issuing binding rules. Key members of Congress say they also are exploring leg-

islation. Eight states have self-driving car laws, and bills have been introduced in 20 states this year, according to tracking by Volvo.

General Motors' dealerships throughout the United States, many of which have close ties to local politicians, give the giant carmaker a lobbying advantage. GM has also made campaign contributions to state lawmakers who introduced the legislation it favors.

GM supports restricting who can deploy self-driving cars because "public acceptance of the technology is going to be very critical," said Harry Lightsey, a top GM lobbyist. "If somebody is allowed to put technology on the roads and highways that proves to be unsafe, that could have very harmful repercussions." The Self-Driving Coalition for Safer Streets, which includes Ford, Lyft, Uber, Volvo and Waymo, opposes the bills, saying they "would favor one company, create an uneven playing field and deter life-saving innovations from reaching citizens in these states by precluding or severely limiting technology companies from testing or deploying fully autonomous vehicles." — AP

'LE COST KILLER' GHOSN QUILTS AS NISSAN CEO

TOKYO: Nissan chief executive Carlos Ghosn said yesterday he will quit the post to focus on overhauling scandal-hit Mitsubishi Motors, but will stay on as chairman at the Japanese automaker he was credited with saving. Ghosn, 62, who also heads up French automaker Renault, will hand over the reins to Nissan veteran Hiroto Saikawa in April.

Among a handful of foreign-born CEOs at Japanese firms, Ghosn earned the nickname Le Cost Killer for his aggressive restructuring at Renault and later the nearly-bankrupt Nissan in the late nineties. He appointed Saikawa as his co-CEO last year in order to focus on Mitsubishi's turnaround. Ghosn took charge at troubled Mitsubishi after Nissan threw it a lifeline in May, buying a one-third stake for about \$2.2 billion as it wrestled with a mileage-cheating scandal that hammered sales.

Two of the affected vehicle models were being made for Nissan, which was the first to uncover problems with the fuel economy data. Questions about Ghosn's succession have swirled around the company for years and they were reignited by string of defections by top Nissan executives in 2014. Ghosn will remain CEO of Renault-which holds a more than 40 percent stake in Nissan under a longstanding alliance-and chairman of all the three automakers, including Mitsubishi. "Having recently taken on new responsibilities at Mitsubishi Motors... I have decided that the time is right for Hiroto Saikawa to succeed me as Nissan's CEO," Ghosn said in a statement yesterday.

'Pass the baton'

He later suggested his plate was getting too full running a trio of major automakers. "There's a point in time where you have to be realistic about how much things you do and you can do well," Ghosn told Bloomberg News. "This is the trigger. There's a moment when you have to pass the baton to someone else. 'I've always said I would love to have a Japanese to be my successor and Saikawa-san is somebody I have been grooming for many years.'"

Renault came to the rescue of a struggling Nissan in 1999 and parachuted in the Brazil-born Ghosn, who set about slashing costs and jobs in a huge corporate overhaul. The companies' fortunes have since shifted with the Japanese firm now accounting for the bulk of profits at the Renault-Nissan alliance, a group that is effectively the fourth biggest automaker in the world behind Volkswagen, Toyota and General Motors.

Ghosn has a high profile in Japan and is known as a major advocate of the country's auto sector. Toyota's boss heaped praise on his rival yesterday, calling Ghosn "the man who rehabilitated Nissan". "We'd like to continue to take advantage of his abilities for the sake of the automotive industry going forward," Akio Toyoda told reporters, according to Jiji Press news agency. — AFP

YAHOO SALVAGES VERIZON DEAL WITH \$350M DISCOUNT

SAN FRANCISCO: Yahoo is taking a \$350 million hit on its previously announced \$4.8 billion sale to Verizon in a concession for security lapses that exposed personal information stored in more than 1 billion Yahoo user accounts. The revised agreement, announced Tuesday, eases investor worries that Verizon Communications Inc. would demand a discount of at least \$1 billion or cancel the deal entirely.

The hacking bombshells, disclosed after the two companies agreed on a sale, represent the two biggest security breaches in internet history. The breaches raised concerns that people might decrease their use of Yahoo email and other digital services that Verizon is buying. A smaller audience makes Yahoo's services less valuable because it reduces the opportunities to show ads - the main reason that Verizon struck the deal seven months ago.

Yahoo has maintained that its users have remained loyal, despite any mistrust that might have been caused by its lax security and the lengthy delay in discovering and disclosing the hacks. The separate attacks occurred in 2013 and 2014; Yahoo disclosed them this past September and December. The lower price, now pegged at \$4.48 billion, will cost Yahoo shareholders roughly 37 cents per share. But they may also be responsible for substantial legal costs.

After the Verizon deal closes, any future bills stemming from the hack will be shouldered by Altaba Inc. - a company that will become the caretaker of Yahoo's remains, which will include about \$7 billion in cash and lucrative stakes in Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba Group and Yahoo Japan. Altaba will be responsible for all costs stemming from shareholder lawsuits and a Securities and Exchange Commission probe into how Yahoo handled the disclosure of the massive hacks. Verizon and Altaba will split costs from all other hack-related lawsuits and government investigations.

Mayer under fire

This agreement "provides protections for both sides" and should help the deal close by the end of June, Marni Walden, Verizon's head of product innovation and new businesses, said in a statement. Yahoo shareholders have to approve it. Avoiding an even larger reduction in the deal value represents a small victory for Yahoo CEO Marissa Mayer, who had already been under fire on Wall Street for her inability to turn around the company and then for the humiliating security lapses that came under her watch. "Yahoo had to get this deal done. There is no better fit for them than Verizon," said Doug Melsheimer, managing director for Bulger Partners, an investment banking firm specializing in technology. Mayer, 41, is widely expected to step down after Verizon takes over, although she hasn't spelled out her plans definitively. If she departs, Mayer will leave with a severance package that was valued at \$44 million last summer. The package is probably worth even more now because it primarily consists of Yahoo stock, which has risen by nearly 20 percent since last summer.

Yahoo shares rose 40 cents to close at \$45.50 while Verizon's stock added 24 cents to finish at \$49.43. Verizon's willingness to accept some of the lingering risks from Yahoo's security breaches underscores the wireless carrier's desire to become a bigger player in the digital advertising market. Google and Facebook currently dominate, but Verizon believes there's room to grow. Because most people already have smartphones, wireless carriers such as Verizon have turned to price cuts and promotions to lure customers from each other. — AP



SUNNYVALE: This Jan 14, 2015 file photo shows Yahoo's headquarters. — AP



This image provided by Apple shows the Steve Jobs Theater at Apple Park in Cupertino, Calif. Apple announced that its new headquarters will open for employees in the spring 2017 and will include the theater named for late company co-founder. — AP

TECH BREAKTHROUGHS TAKE BACKSEAT IN UPCOMING APPLE IPHONE LAUNCH

10TH ANNIVERSARY IPHONE WILL OFFER A LESSON IN HOW MUCH INDUSTRY HAS MATURED

SAN FRANCISCO: When Apple Inc launches its much-anticipated 10th anniversary iPhone this fall, it will offer an unwitting lesson in how much the smartphone industry it pioneered has matured. The new iPhone is expected to include new features such as high-resolution displays, wireless charging and 3-D sensors. Rather than representing major breakthroughs, however, most of the innovations have been available in competing phones for several years.

Apple's relatively slow adoption of new features both reflects and reinforces the fact smartphone customers are holding onto their phones longer. Timothy Arcuri, an analyst at Cowen & Co, believes upwards of 40 percent of iPhones on the market are more than two years old, a historical high. That is a big reason why investors have driven Apple shares to an all-time high. There is pent-up demand for a new iPhone, even if it does not offer breakthrough technologies.

Driven by marketing

It is not clear whether Apple deliberately held off on packing some of the new features into the current iPhone 7, which has been criticized for a lack of differentiation from its predecessor. Apple declined to comment on the upcoming product. Still, the development and roll-out of the anniversary iPhone suggest Apple's product strategy is driven less by technological innovation than by consumer upgrade cycles and Apple's own business and marketing needs.

"When a market gets saturated, the growth is all about refresh," said Bob O'Donnell of Technalysis

Research. "This is exactly what happened to PCs. It's exactly what happened to tablets. It's starting to happen to smartphones."

Apple is close-mouthed about upcoming product features, but analysts and reports from Asian component suppliers and others indicate that high-resolution displays based on OLED technology — possibly with curved edges—are likely to be part of the anniversary phone. A radical new design is not expected, according to analysts.

Some of the anticipated new technologies, notably wireless charging, remain messy. Samsung Electronics Co Ltd phones, for example, feature wireless charging but support two different sets of standards, one called Qi and the other AirFuel. Apple recently joined the group backing Qi. But there are still at least five different groups working on wireless charging technology within Apple, according to a person with knowledge of the matter.

As to 3-D sensors, there is already one hiding in the iPhone 7. The front camera features what is known as a time-of-flight sensor, which helps it autofocus and is used in numerous phones including the BlackBerry, according to TechInsights, a firm that examines the chips inside tech devices. That sensor could be upgraded to a higher-resolution version that could handle 3-D mapping for facial recognition, said Jim Morrison, vice president at TechInsights.

Some analysts also speculate the company could remove the phone's home button, placing it and a fingerprint sensor beneath the front display

glass, based on patents the company has filed.

Slow growth

Global smartphone sales were up only 2.3 percent to 1.47 billion units in 2016, according to IDC. Many carriers in the United States have stopped subsidizing phones, causing phone buyers to think harder about their next purchase.

Apple will likely make a heavy marketing push around the phone's 10th anniversary. "iPhone set the standard for mobile computing in its first decade and we are just getting started. The best is yet to come," Chief Executive Officer Tim Cook said in a statement Jan. 8, the date the iPhone was announced by then-CEO Steve Jobs in 2007.

In 2015, the last year it disclosed the figure, Apple spent \$1.8 billion on advertising, up 50 percent from the year before and nearly four times the \$467 million it spent in 2007 when it first released the iPhone. And the company continues to excel at selling higher-priced phones.

Chief Financial Officer Luca Maestri attributed the most recent quarter's record-setting 78.3 million iPhones sold to the iPhone 7 Plus, which for the first time included a new dual camera feature not found in other models. The iPhone 7 Plus tops out at \$969 with memory upgrades and a jet black finish. O'Donnell of Technalysis Research believes that with the next iPhone, Apple might even introduce a \$1,000-plus "ultra-premium device for the real Apple-crazed folks out there who want to stand out." — Reuters



DENVER: In this Nov 10, 2016, file photo, Golden State Warriors guard Stephen Curry, center, jokes with teammates Kevin Durant, left, and Klay Thompson during the Warriors' NBA basketball game against the Nuggets in Denver. With all that was made before the season about adding Kevin Durant to an already star-studded roster, Golden State's players have jelled just fine. —AP

BASKETBALL

NBA RETURNS FOR A BREAK-NECK FINISH TO REGULAR SEASON

DENVER: LeBron James, Steph Curry and the rest of the NBA players and management have had a chance to catch their collective breath, kick their feet up for a few days and rest up after a frenetic first three-and-a-half months of the season.

The big stars had their fun in New Orleans. Those who weren't chosen for the All-Star game got away for some beach time. Coaches and executives took the time to engage in self-scouting and trade talks to figure out how they want to approach the last two months of the regular season.

When play resumes tonight, a few hours after the trade deadline expires, it will be a six-week sprint to the finish. The No. 8 seed in the Western Conference is up for grabs as well as pretty much every seed in the East. The jockeying for position could turn the final hours before the

deadline into a frenzy.

And though the league has been idle for a week, it will not look the same when the games return. DeMarcus Cousins moved from Sacramento to New Orleans in a stunning trade. Jeanie Buss and Magic Johnson cleaned house with the Los Angeles Lakers. The Houston Rockets have fortified their bench by adding Lou Williams and big-name stars like Jimmy Butler, Paul George and Derrick Rose are waiting to see if they will be on the move as well.

And let's not forget Carmelo Anthony, though the Knicks' All-Star has final say-so in a move. With all the chaos and uncertainty flying around, James said there is no reason to panic in Cleveland.

He assured Cavaliers fans before the break that the team was going to be just fine even if it wasn't able to make any

more moves, but injuries to Kevin Love and J.R. Smith have given other teams in the East confidence that the No. 1 seed can be had.

"As long as I'm in the lineup, we've got a chance," James said after it was announced that Love would miss six to eight weeks to recover from knee surgery. "We're good. Kev is out for an extended period of time. JR's been out. But I'm in the lineup, obviously we've got a chance against anybody."

Hard to argue with the logic, considering James has appeared in six straight NBA Finals. But that won't stop the Celtics, Wizards and Raptors from giving chase. Boston is in second place, just two wins behind Cleveland, the surging Wizards have rocketed up the standings and are in third and the fourth-place Raptors just acquired Serge Ibaka to bolster their defense and climb back into the hunt.

Down the ladder in the East, seventh-place Chicago, eighth-place Detroit and 11th-place Charlotte are teams to watch near the deadline. If the Bulls decide to trade Butler, a full-blown rebuild would be started in Chicago. The Pistons have floundered after a promising start to the season and could look to move struggling point guard Reggie Jackson while the Hornets could try to acquire some help for Kemba Walker to jump back into the chase.

In the West, the top of the standings look a little more stable with the Golden State Warriors the clear favorites and third-seeded Houston with five more victories than the fourth-seeded Clippers. But five teams are within three wins of eight-seeded Denver, though the Pelicans certainly pushed themselves to the forefront by landing Cousins.

Suddenly the 11th-seeded Pelicans arguably have two of the top 10 players in the league in Cousins and Anthony Davis, giving New Orleans an enormous frontcourt that should be cause for concern all the way to the Bay Area. "We can wreak havoc on this league," Cousins said. "Will it happen overnight? Probably not, but our potential is scary." — AP

WIZARDS ACQUIRE BOGDANOVIC IN TRADE WITH BROOKLYN NETS

WASHINGTON: The Washington Wizards added scoring punch to their bench on the eve of the trade deadline, acquiring swingman Bojan Bogdanovic from the Brooklyn Nets.

Washington also got forward Chris McCullough in the deal and sent a lottery-protected 2017 first-round pick, Marcus Thornton and Andrew Nicholson to Brooklyn. The Wizards announced the trade Wednesday night. Bogdanovic, 27, averaged a career-high 14.2 points a game as a starter for the struggling Nets. He will add depth to the Wizards, who are in third place in the Eastern Conference.

"Bojan is a very good shooter and a talented overall scorer whose versatility gives us an added dimension as we gear up for the stretch run," general manager Ernie Grunfeld said in a statement. "He is a proven starter that will provide us an added boost off the bench and allow us to be creative with our lineups."

With the addition of Bogdanovic, a pending restricted free agent, Washington continues its push to challenge the NBA champion Cleveland Cavaliers, Toronto Raptors and Boston Celtics in the East. The Wizards have won 18 of their past 21 games and surged up the standings after a slow start under new coach Scott Brooks.

"I like where we are as a team, but we're not satisfied," Brooks said. "We're not just going to be happy with what we've done in the first half. We want to come out and play good basketball throughout the season."

It's the second consecutive season the Wizards traded their first-round pick at the deadline after acquiring power forward Markieff Morris from the Phoenix Suns in 2016. Morris is a starter along with All-Star John Wall, Bradley Beal, Otto Porter and Marcin Gortat, while Bogdanovic is expected to be their sixth man. — AP

NBA LEGEND YAO MING NAMED CHINESE BASKETBALL CHIEF

BEIJING: NBA Hall of Famer Yao Ming called for "urgent" reform and said he was facing a multitude of problems as he was elected president of the Chinese Basketball Association (CBA) yesterday.

The giant former Houston Rockets centre, 36, arrives at the post as China searches for new superstars and more glory days for its national team, which has largely stalled since his retirement in 2011. Yao, the first league head not drawn from government ranks, has long advocated reform of how basketball is run in his country, which has failed to produce anyone close to his calibre.

"At the moment, the most urgent matter is the reform of the CBA, which we must set on a virtuous cycle that will increase our influence and vitality, and bring new ideas to the fore," he told a news conference in Beijing.

"The biggest problem is that there is no 'biggest problem'. The problems are everywhere. I believe this is a common thing to encounter in the process of reform." He did not give specifics.

Yao was quoted by Chinese media as earlier telling the CBA he would work in the spirit of an official push by Communist Party authorities to reform China's sports management, part of an effort to transform the country into a sporting superpower.

Yao has previously advocated change "with the ultimate goal of improving the level of the national team", while not relying excessively on importing foreign talent to China's league. He has also called for enhancing the fan experience in what is rated as China's most popular sport.

CHINA'S 'GREAT WALL'

Now an investor in his former team Shanghai Sharks, whom he led to the Chinese title in 2002 before packing his bags for the NBA, Yao indicated he would dispose of his share in the club in light of his CBA appointment.

The 7-foot-6 (2.29m) Yao towers over basketball in China after his a ground-breaking eight-season NBA career, in which he became a popular global ambassador for the sport.

Chinese fans began to dream of glory in the early 2000s when Yao partnered with fellow 7-footers Mengke Bateer and Wang Zhizhi to form China's basketball "Great Wall".

Yao led the team to three straight FIBA Asian championships in the 2000s, but the national team has only won the title twice over the past decade, including the latest edition in 2015, and has consistently struggled in Olympic competition.

They are currently ranked 14th in the world. Yao was the NBA's first overall draft selection in 2002 and the first player drafted number one who didn't play collegiately in the United States. He has continued promoting the game after he was forced into retirement in 2011 by repeated foot injuries. —AFP



HOUSTON: In this Friday, Feb. 3, 2017 file photo, retired Houston Rockets center Yao Ming speaks during his jersey retirement ceremony at halftime of an NBA basketball game between the Rockets and the Chicago Bulls in Houston. The Chinese Basketball Association has voted unanimously to appoint NBA Hall of Famer Yao as its new president. — AP

SHIFFRIN EYES MULTIPLE MEDAL HAUL AT PYEONGCHANG

WASHINGTON: US alpine ski star Mikaela Shiffrin, who captured her third consecutive world slalom title last weekend in Switzerland, is looking at a possible multiple medal haul at next year's Pyeongchang Winter Olympics.

The 21-year-old American will defend slalom gold next February 13 in South Korea after winning at Sochi in 2014 at age 18, becoming the youngest Olympic slalom champion in history.

"Performing at the Olympics is on a whole other level because it's only once every four years. It sets you up for the rest of your career. So there is a lot more pressure," Shiffrin said in a US Olympic Committee conference call.

"It's going to be a totally new feeling having won a gold medal and competed at an Olympics before. There are more expectations around me having won

a gold medal. I sort of have to take it in stride."

But Shiffrin, who finished second in the giant slalom at this month's world championships, said the worlds made her "think more about big competitions and my goals" for Pyeongchang, looking beyond her usual disciplines for medals in Super G and combined as well.

"Downhill isn't even out of the question either," she said. "I'm trying to set myself up to be a medal contender in three or four events, which would really be incredible."

Shiffrin said the intense training and competition at worlds could pay off in South Korea next year as well as in Switzerland last week.

"These are the kinds of periods I can make breakthroughs-with my skiing, with my equipment, with my mentality-that will help me through the

Olympics," Shiffrin said. "They could be the difference between 10th place and getting a medal." But the next year also offers rivals time to improve and challenge Shiffrin's slalom throne.

"There's time for other athletes to improve," she said. "Anybody who is winning World Cup races is generally going to be good competition at the Olympics. The girls who have been strong the past few years will continue to be strong."

"It will be great competition at Pyeongchang. There will be a couple girls who haven't been strong this year who will turn on the afterburners. We're still a year out. There's time for things to change."

But Shiffrin has clearly made herself the woman to beat in her speciality, tweeting this week after her successful worlds effort, "I may not be a real superhero, but I got to feel like one." — AFP

OLYMPICS

BUDAPEST BID CHIEF SLAMS OLYMPICS WITHDRAWAL

BUDAPEST: The chief of Budapest's Olympics bid committee has deplored the capital's withdrawal from the race to host the 2024 Games, after a referendum drive forced the city to drop its candidacy. The decision, announced by the right-wing government late Wednesday evening, leaves Paris and Los Angeles to fight a neck-and-neck battle for 2024. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) is due to vote for the host on September 13.

Boston, Hamburg and Rome had already pulled out of the contest to follow 2020 hosts Tokyo, all because of pressure over the cost. "It frustrates me because we have never been so close... We dropped out in front of the finish line," Balazs Furjes, chairman of Budapest 2024, told the Hungarian news agency MTI.

"We had unity and we lost it," he added of the failed campaign. Budapest City Council has to vote on the bid's withdrawal on March 2, before the committee can officially inform the IOC of its exit. The IOC said it would not comment until officially notified.

The move is a setback for the sports-mad premier Viktor Orban, a key backer of the bid. It comes just months after low voter turnout voided his anti-migrant referendum aimed at rejecting a troubled European Union refugee quota plan.

'MIND SAID NO'

Hungary's Olympic bid unravelled after a group of young activists collected over a quarter million signatures demanding a referendum, almost double the threshold required to trigger a ballot.

Critics of the Olympics drive, fearing spiralling costs and corruption, said taxpayers should decide how their money is spent "I work in sports... but even if my heart was beating for the Hungarian Olympics, my mind said no," Eszter Balatoni, 37, told AFP in Budapest yesterday.

"There are so many other things that need financing in this country, like education and healthcare."

Momentum Movement (MoMo), which organised the petition, said it never sought to drop the initiative but had merely wanted a public debate. "We have pushed back the government... but we have also missed an opportunity for discussion," the group's leader Andras Fekete-Gyor said at a press conference yesterday.

Some locals expressed frustration at the cancelled bid. "The majority of costs would have been paid by the IOC. These young liberals have destroyed the dreams of several million Hungarians," businessman Vilmos Lisztes, 47, told AFP.

The so-called "Nolimpia" drive had been aided by opposition parties critical of Orban, prompting the government on Wednesday to accuse them of turning the matter "into a political party affair".

Observers said Orban and his ruling Fidesz party had no choice but to withdraw the bid because of the lack of public support, which is a key criteria for the IOC when making its decision.

"A lost referendum would have given too much of a blow to Fidesz, one year ahead of the general elections," analyst Zoltan Cegledi told Hungarian media. — AFP



TOKYO: This picture taken on February 22, 2017 shows Japanese swimmer Ippei Watanabe (2nd L) smiling in the pool during a training session at the Waseda University swimming pool in Tokyo. Fresh from setting a new world record, Japan's latest swim sensation Ippei Watanabe is plotting Tokyo Olympic glory in 2020 - and he wants his gold medal sealed with a kiss. — AFP

SWIMMING

JAPANESE ROMEO WATANABE SEEKS TOKYO GOLD AND MORE

TOKYO: Fresh from setting a new world record, Japan's latest swim sensation Ippei Watanabe is plotting Tokyo Olympic glory in 2020 — and he wants his gold medal sealed with a kiss. The 19-year-old, who shot to fame with a jaw-dropping time of 2 minutes 06.67 seconds in the men's 200 metres breaststroke last month, plans to set another world best in the Olympic final and celebrate by sweeping some lucky damsel off her feet with a dashing wedding proposal. "I'm blessed that I'll be at my peak as a swimmer when the Tokyo Olympics arrive," Watanabe told AFP in an interview.

"My aim is to win the final in a world record and then propose to someone with my gold medal," he added, coyly declining to elaborate on who might be the object of his desire.

"There's only three years to go and I'm determined not to waste the opportunity to make the Tokyo Olympics the crowning glory of my career." Behind

Watanabe's hopes for a slushy Hollywood ending, burns a competitive fire to emulate boyhood idol Kosuke Kitajima, who won 100m and 200m breaststroke gold at the 2004 and 2008 Olympics. "When I was 10 I buried a time capsule," said the Waseda University student, who broke the world mark in Tokyo watched by the Japan swimming great. "I put in a message with my dreams written on it: saying I wanted to be like Kosuke Kitajima and swim at the Olympics."

Having eclipsed a world best once owned by Kitajima and competing in Rio last summer, Watanabe has gone some way to reaching those goals. But the record-breaker, who finished sixth in the Olympic final, is hungry to prove his wonder swim was no fluke.

'MARKED MAN'

"I'll be a marked man at this year's world championships," nodded the 1.93-metre (6ft 3in) Watanabe, looking

ahead to the July 14-30 global championships in Budapest, where the spectre of Kazakhstan's Olympic champion Dmitry Balandin is set to loom large.

"People used to think I was weak under pressure. But if I can lower the world record again and win the gold medal, I'll be able to call myself the real world number one." Watanabe revealed that the pain of coming up short in Rio fuelled his surprise world record.

"I was gutted after that Olympic final," he said. "I just wanted to crawl into bed. But if I hadn't suffered like that I don't think I would have set the world record. I knew I would break it at some point, just not so quickly." A voracious student of the sport, Watanabe studies video of Kitajima's races to pick up tips.

But as he continues his rise to the top, there is a cautionary tale for Watanabe in the form of fellow Japanese Akihiro Yamaguchi, who broke the 200m breaststroke world record in 2012 before fading into obscurity. — AFP

KAZAKHSTAN BIATHLETES ANGRY DESPITE WINNING ASIAN TITLES

SAPPORO: Kazakhstan's top biathletes lashed out at Austrian authorities yesterday over a doping raid which they said made them feel like criminals.

Kazakhstan won two gold medals in biathlon in Japan yesterday, but athletes said their celebrations were dampened by their experience a week earlier, when they were investigated and cleared of doping at the world titles at the Alpine resort of Hochfilzen.

Austrian police raided the Kazakh team on February 8, seizing medical products, medicines and portable telephones and taking blood and urine samples from 10 athletes. The tests came back negative and the

International Biathlon Union (IBU) said it was not considering any disciplinary action, but competitors say they are still aggrieved by the events. Galina Vishnevskaya, who won the women's 7.5 kilometre sprint at the Asian Winter Games Thursday, said the Austrian police's actions had ruined her chances of doing well at the world championships.

The 23-year-old only managed 86th place in Austria, despite having just won two gold medals at the World University Games in Almaty. "This awful situation with doping suspicion got me completely out," she said. "It is very frustrating when you are treated like a criminal without any justification."

Austrian police said they carried out the raids after seizing doping-related material from a van that was found to belong to the Kazakh team. The Kazakh team has strongly denied any suggestions of wrongdoing.

The Kazakhstan National Biathlon Federation said there was "absolutely no surprise" that the athletes were cleared of doping when the tests came back negative, but Vishnevskaya said the damage had already been done.

"We are clean, it was proved, but we got a very unpleasant experience of being judged without a single justification. This is not the way it should work," she said.

Yan Savitskiy finished 24th in the men's

10km sprint at the world championship in Austria and said the team was "exhausted after the World Championships in Hochfilzen". "Lots of work was given to participating at the world championships, plus the stressful days with seizures and interviews," he said. "We still did not get back our belongings and it is disturbing." Savitskiy won the Asian title, beating his teammate Vassiliy Podkorytov as Kazakhstan took gold and silver. Biathlon, a winter sport that combines cross-country skiing and rifle shooting, is already under a cloud following revelations of Russian doping and the decision to strip Russia of hosting rights for the next world championships.—AFP

RUGBY

JOHN BARCLAY TO CAPTAIN SCOTLAND AGAINST WALES

LONDON: John Barclay will replace the injured Greig Laidlaw as Scotland captain for Saturday's Six Nations international against Wales at Murrayfield, it was announced yesterday. Laidlaw was ruled out of the rest of the tournament after suffering an ankle injury that saw the scrum-half go off during the first half of Scotland's eventual 22-16 loss to France in Paris earlier this month. Back-row forward Barclay took over the captaincy at the Stade de France and the flanker also had to leave the field, with a shoulder and head injury, although he has since been passed fit.

The 30-year-old Barclay, who plays his club rugby in Wales for the Llanelli-based Scarlets, has been the official Scotland captain once before when standing in for the injured Mike Blair against New Zealand in 2010. "John has played a vital role in our leadership group and has led by example throughout this and previous campaigns," said Scotland coach Vern Cotter yesterday.

"It was disappointing to lose Greig (Laidlaw) however we continue to develop a system of shared leadership in this squad, which has supported this transition.

"It'll be a proud moment for John and one which he thoroughly deserves." Cotter has made five changes to his side, with three enforced through injury.

Laidlaw's place will be taken by Ali Price, who came off the bench in Paris, with the Glasgow scrum-half set to make his first Test start this weekend.

The absence of Laidlaw, also Scotland's first-choice goal-kicker, was described as a "massive loss" by Wales scrum-half Rhys Webb on Wednesday. Finn Russell is now set to take over the kicking duties, having somehow missed a conversion from in front of the posts when Laidlaw was off the field in Paris, although the Scotland fly-half did kick two penalties.

'ATTACKING MINDSET'

Elsewhere in the backs, wing Tim Visser replaces Sean Maitland (rib injury), while back-row forward Ryan Wilson, recovered from the elbow infection that saw him miss the France game, comes in for the injured Josh Strauss (kidney).

Cotter has made two tactical changes in the pack, with back-row John Hardie and prop Gordon Reid respectively in for Hamish Watson and Allan Dell, who both drop down to the bench after starting Scotland's opening two matches of the Championship.

The Gray brothers, Jonny and Richie, continue as Scotland's second-row pair. "We've now had two weeks to recover, reflect and prepare a new game plan for Wales," said Cotter.

The New Zealander added: "We know the Welsh will throw everything at us but we will keep our attacking mind-set and look to convert pressure to points as often as possible. "It's a huge weekend in the championship and we're still right in the mix." Both Wales, who named their team on Wednesday, and Scotland do indeed remain in title contention after one win from two matches so far this Six Nations. The Welsh beat Italy 33-7 in Rome before losing 21-16 to England in Cardiff, while the Scots launched their campaign with a 27-22 win at home to Ireland. Wales, however, will head to Edinburgh seeking a 10th consecutive win over Scotland. They have not lost to Scotland since a 21-9 defeat in 2007, a run also featuring four successive victories at Murrayfield. — AFP



TOWCESTER: Mercedes AMG Petronas Formula One driver Lewis Hamilton drives during a launch event for the new 2017 season car at the Silverstone motor racing circuit near Towcester, central England yesterday.— AFP

FORMULA ONE

HAMILTON UNVEILS NEW MERCEDES W08 CAR

SILVERSTONE: Lewis Hamilton and his new Mercedes team-mate Valtteri Bottas unveiled the W08 car they will pilot in the 2017 Formula One season at Silverstone yesterday.

The new car has a black, silver and teal chassis and has been produced to meet new regulations intended to make F1 cars faster and more demanding to drive. Three-time champion Hamilton gave the car a spin amid blustery conditions at Silverstone, 80 miles (129 kilometres) northwest of London, before posing for pictures alongside Bottas.

"It is the most detailed piece of machinery I have seen in F1," Hamilton said. "This is not an actual test—it's just a few laps to make sure the car will run.

But I was able to go faster in the last couple of laps. "It feels almost identical to last year's car in terms of ergonomics, but you have this bigger, more powerful beast around you."

Briton Hamilton, 32, finished second in the last year's Drivers' Championship behind team-mate Nico Rosberg, who abruptly retired at the end of the season. Bottas, a 27-year-old Finn, has joined from Williams to succeed Rosberg. As well as the departure of Rosberg, Mercedes have also lost executive technical director Paddy Lowe, who is expected to join Williams, with James Allison set to arrive from Ferrari to take his place. But executive director Toto Wolff believes the upheaval could be

positive. "Disruption can be a very positive factor in a company's development," Wolff told a press conference at Silverstone. "When Nico decided to call it a day, of course the initial information came as a surprise. But we quickly realised it provided an opportunity.

"Having Valtteri now in the car is an exciting opportunity for us. In terms of Paddy, it's a little bit the same. "You can either follow the concept of 'never change a winning team' or try to emphasise what's important for the future." Mercedes will be looking to secure a fourth successive Constructors' Championship when the 2017 season begins at the Australian Grand Prix in Melbourne on March 26. — AFP

BOXING

MANNY PACQUIAO 'IN NEGOTIATIONS' TO FIGHT AMIR KHAN

MANILA: Philippine boxing hero Manny Pacquiao yesterday said he was "in negotiations" to face British fighter Amir Khan, after weeks of conflicting reports over his next bout.

"My team and I are in negotiations with Amir Khan for our next fight. Further announcements coming soon," Pacquiao, 38, said on his official Twitter feed.

Pacquiao's post follows various accounts from different sources over who he will be facing next and where the fight will be held. Last month, Pacquiao's American promoter Bob Arum was widely quoted as saying the Filipino would next face Australia's Jeff Horn in April, although Pacquiao's aides insisted nothing had been confirmed.

A business adviser of the fighter nicknamed "Pac-man" said this week that his next opponent would "most likely" be Khan in Dubai, but other aides declined to comment.

Pacquiao, the WBO welterweight champion, tweeted on February 11: "See you in UAE for my next fight. #TeamPacquiao". He also posted a poll on his Twitter feed asking his 108,000 followers to choose either Horn, Khan, American Terence Crawford or Briton Kell Brook as his next opponent. The poll has since been taken down. Pacquiao announced a brief retirement last year but made a successful comeback against Jessie Vargas in Las Vegas in November, saying he still felt like a youngster.

Pacquiao initially said he was retiring to focus on his new role as Philippine senator, after winning elections last year on the back of his sporting fame. — AFP



TOKYO: This file photo taken on November 25, 2016 shows WBO welterweight world champion Manny Pacquiao posing for the media following a press conference at his boxing gym in Tokyo. — AFP

UFC MUSCLES INTO ASIA WITH EYES FIRMLY ON CHINA

SINGAPORE: The world's biggest mixed martial arts organisation, the Las Vegas-based UFC, yesterday announced its long-awaited return to Asia with a Singapore show and an "ambition" to debut in mainland China. Ultimate Fighting Championship, which has shot to sporting prominence by making global stars of fighters such as Conor McGregor and Ronda Rousey, said it would host three events in Asia and two in Australia and New Zealand, though only confirming the Singapore date on June 17. While UFC has previously hosted two events in the southern Chinese semi-autonomous city of Macau, UFC Head of International and Content Joe Carr said its sights were now firmly fixed on the lucrative Chinese mainland. "We're definitely working on our first event in mainland China," he said at a press conference in Singapore.

"We've had a couple of events in Macau but it's completely different going to a Beijing or a Shanghai. I have nothing to announce but it's definitely a priority and a focus for the organisation. We were successful in Macau and that's fine but our ambitions are mainland China." — AFP



PUNE: Australia's Matthew Renshaw plays a defensive stroke as India's close-in fielders Wriddhiman Saha (L), Ajinkya Rahane (2L), Murali Vijay, (3R), captain Virat Kohli (2R) and Cheteshwar Pujara look on during the first day of the first Test cricket match between India and Australia at the Maharashtra Cricket Association stadium in Pune yesterday. — AFP

CRICKET

RENSHAW, STARC REVIVE AUSTRALIA IN INDIA TEST

PUNE: Australia's Matt Renshaw admitted he feared he had let his teammates down by leaving the fray with an upset stomach before returning to hit a gritty half-century in the first Test against India yesterday. In the opening day of a four-match series between the world's top two sides, Renshaw's innings and some late Mitchell Starc fireworks pulled Australia back from the brink as they reached 256 for nine at stumps.

Starc has so far made 57 off 58 balls and Josh Hazlewood was with him at the crease on one at Pune's Maharashtra Cricket Association Stadium. Indian seamer Umesh Yadav claimed four wickets while the spinners Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja took two each. The left-handed Renshaw was the anchor of the innings, top-scoring with 68, although it was Starc who provided the entertainment and caused a rethink in assessments of who had the better of the day. All had seemed calm with Renshaw for most of the morning session but when David Warner fell with the scores on 82, the English-born batsman caused a stir by following his opening partner back to the pavilion.

As news filtered out that he had an upset stomach, the 20-year-old Renshaw became the talk of social media with even the famously tough former Australian captain Allan Border weighing in. "Hope he's lying down half-dead, because as a captain I wouldn't be happy," Border wrote on Twitter as Renshaw lay on his sick-bed.

But after Australian skipper Steve Smith fell for 27 just before the tea break, Renshaw then strode back to the crease to register his second Test fifty in his fifth game. Renshaw said he had been feeling unwell for most of the morning and had tried to tough it out before deciding he had to leg it off the pitch. "It was tough. I wasn't too sure on the ruling, I didn't know you could retire

ill so I thought I just had to get out there and make sure I batted till lunch," he told reporters. "It wasn't an ideal situation and coming back it was probably a bit strange for me, waiting to bat because as an opener you just go straight out there and bat."

SMITH 'WASN'T THRILLED'

Renshaw admitted his captain Smith "wasn't too thrilled" about his retirement just before the break.

"But he understands that when you need to go to the toilet, you need to go to the toilet," he said. "It was probably a couple of hours before I came back but I felt bad knowing that I could be letting the team down—that's why I went back out there. "I wanted to do my bit for the team and try and make sure we had a pretty good day."

Renshaw struck 10 fours and a six during his 156-ball stay which ended when he edged a ball from Ashwin and was caught by Murali Vijay in the slips.

His dismissal was swiftly followed by the departure of Steve O'Keefe and

Nathan Lyon who both fell for ducks off consecutive Umesh deliveries.

Warner, who had tackled the Indian spinners with good feet movement, was the first of Umesh's four victims, falling to a good length delivery that hit the bat en route to stumps just before the lunch break. "There was some movement, there was a bit of reverse swing as well. I tried to keep the ball on the up," Umesh said of Warner's wicket. "It is a turning wicket and reverse swing is always helpful on such pitches."

Lyon's dismissal meant the visitors—who have a dreadful recent record on the sub-continent—had slumped from 119-1 to 205 for nine before Starc put on an unbeaten 51-run stand with Hazlewood. Starc, better known for his fast-bowling, caught the Indian attack by surprise by carting them around the ground in a blistering innings which featured five boundaries and three sixes. It was the ninth Test fifty.

The match is the first in a four-Test series between the world's two top-ranked sides. — AFP

SCOREBOARD

PUNE, India: Scoreboard at stumps on the opening day of the first Test between India and Australia in Pune yesterday:

Australia 1st innings		Total (9 wickets; 94 overs)	256
D. Warner b U. Yadav	38	Fall of wickets: 1-82 (Warner), 1-82 (Renshaw retired not out), 2-119 (S. Marsh), 3-149 (Handscomb), 4-149 (Smith), 5-166 (M. Marsh), 6-190 (Wade), 7-196 (Renshaw), 8-205 (O'Keefe), 9-205 (Lyon).	
M. Renshaw c Vijay b Ashwin	68	Bowling: Sharma 11-0-27-0 (1nb), Ashwin 34-10-59-2, J. Yadav 13-1-58-1 (1nb), Jadeja 24-4-74-2 (2nb), U. Yadav 12-3-32-4 (1nb).	
S. Smith c Kohli b Ashwin	27	India: M. Vijay, L. Rahul, C. Pujara, V. Kohli (capt), A. Rahane, W. Saha, R. Ashwin, R. Jadeja, J. Yadav, I. Sharma, U. Yadav.	
S. Marsh c Kohli b J. Yadav	16		
P. Handscomb lbw b Jadeja	22		
M. Marsh lbw b Jadeja	4		
M. Wade lbw b U. Yadav	8		
M. Starc not out	57		
S. O'Keefe c Saha b U. Yadav	0		
N. Lyon lbw b U. Yadav	0		
J. Hazlewood not out	1		
Extras (lb 6, nb 9)	15		

BIG PHIL EXPRESSES SYMPATHY AFTER FEASTING ON 'BEEF BALL'

HONG KONG: Eastern Sports Club coach Chan Yuen-ting was comforted by her opposite number Luiz Felipe Scolari after her Asian Champions League debut at Chinese powerhouse Guangzhou Evergrande ended in a nightmarish 7-0 defeat.

The 28-year-old Chan, affectionately nicknamed "Aw Yuen", which translates as beef ball, became the first woman to guide a men's team in a top-flight continental competition when she led the Hong Kong champions out at the Tianhe Stadium on Wednesday.

Her dreams of giving the 2002 World Cup-winning Brazil coach a run for his money soon turned to dust when full-back Wong Tsz-ho was sent off for a handball within the first four minutes and Ricardo Goulart slotted home from the resultant penalty.

Eastern were run ragged by a relentless

Guangzhou and found themselves trailing 3-0 and reduced to nine men after Wong Chi-chung was sent off for a second yellow card offence in the 34th minute. The home side added four more goals in the second half.

Scolari, who embraced Chan after the game, said the red cards had distorted the nature of the contest.

"I comforted her and told her this match cannot be a real evidence for your ability," he was quoted as saying by the South China Morning Post.

"This is quite different when within such a short time you have two red cards like this—you can't take it seriously."

Chan agreed that losing two players had sealed her team's fate and said Eastern would need to adapt quickly to life in the region's elite competition with five more Group G matches still to play.

"We have learned a very valuable lesson today," she added. "Of course losing the game is a very big disappointment, but we learned we need to adjust our mentality as soon as possible."

"After the (first) red card everything changed, all our tactics and plans had to be changed. And in a competition like this the pace is quite different from that we encounter in Hong Kong... it's our debut and naturally we'll make mistakes."

Eastern had earlier refunded fans who planned to travel to China for the game after informing them that they would not be able to attend, citing "internal problems" for the situation.

The Hong Kong club's next match in the competition is a home game against Japan's Kawasaki Frontale on March 1. Korea's Suwon Samsung Bluewings are the other side in the group. — Reuters

NHL

DUCKS END BOSTON'S 4-GAME WINNING STREAK

ANAHEIM: Rickard Rakell broke a tie with his second goal with 2:34 to play, helping the Anaheim Ducks end Boston's four-game winning streak under new coach Bruce Cassidy with a 5-3 victory over the Bruins on Wednesday night. Rakell also scored in the second period for the Ducks and has 24 goals in his outstanding season. Ondrej Kase, Josh Manson and Andrew Cogliano also scored for Anaheim, and Jonathan Bernier made 26 saves in his first victory since Jan. 23. Frank Vatrano scored the tying goal in the third period for the Bruins, who hadn't lost since Cassidy replaced Claude Julien on Feb. 7. Defensemen Brandon Carlo and Zdeno Chara scored early goals, and Tuukka Rask stopped 20 shots. Anaheim beat Boston for the seventh straight time.

OILERS 4, FLORIDA 3

Kris Russell's goal with 7:58 left was his first in more than a year and lifted Edmonton over Florida to end the Panthers' five-game winning streak. Russell's goal was his first since Feb. 11, 2016, when he played for Calgary. He went goalless in his first 48 games with the Oilers. Fellow defenseman Oscar Klefbom also scored for Edmonton, as did forwards Zack Kassian and Ryan Nugent-Hopkins. Connor McDavid, who came into the night leading the NHL scoring race, had an assist on Russell's goal. Aleksander Barkov, Colton Sceviour and Jonathan Marchessault scored for Florida. Keith Yandle had two assists for the Panthers, giving him 400 points for his career. Cam Talbot stopped 31 shots for the Oilers, who have won their last eight games at Florida - last losing on the Panthers' ice in 2002. James Reimer made 31 saves for the Panthers, who just completed a 5-0-0 road trip.

CAPITALS 4, FLYERS 1

Evgeny Kuznetsov scored two goals, Braden Holtby made 33 saves and Washington beat Philadelphia. Nicklas Backstrom and T.J. Oshie also scored for



ANAHEIM: Andrew Cogliano #7 of the Anaheim Ducks chases Adam McQuaid #54 of the Boston Bruins during the third period of a game at Honda Center on Wednesday in Anaheim, California. — AFP

the NHL-leading Capitals, who snapped a two-game losing streak. Brayden Schenn had the lone goal for the strug-

gling Flyers, who are 2-5 in their last seven games. Michal Neuvirth stopped 25 shots for Philadelphia. — AP

NHL results/standings

Anaheim 5, Boston 3; Washington 4, Philadelphia 1; Edmonton 4, Florida 3.

Western Conference						EASTERN CONFERENCE							
Central Division						ATLANTIC DIVISION							
	W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS							
Minnesota	39	14	6	198	138	84	Montreal	32	20	8	169	155	72
Chicago	37	18	5	177	154	79	Ottawa	32	20	6	158	153	70
St. Louis	31	24	5	170	173	67	Toronto	28	20	11	186	177	67
Nashville	28	22	9	169	165	65	Florida	28	21	10	152	166	66
Winnipeg	28	29	6	184	199	62	Boston	30	24	6	162	161	66
Dallas	23	27	10	165	193	56	Tampa Bay	27	24	8	164	167	62
Colorado	16	39	3	114	192	35	Buffalo	26	24	10	147	168	62
							Detroit	24	26	10	150	178	58
PACIFIC DIVISION						METROPOLITAN DIVISION							
San Jose	35	18	7	166	144	77	Washington	40	12	7	199	127	87
Edmonton	33	20	8	176	159	74	Pittsburgh	37	14	8	207	166	82
Anaheim	32	20	10	161	157	74	Columbus	37	16	5	187	143	79
Calgary	30	26	4	159	172	64	NY Rangers	38	19	2	198	155	78
Los Angeles	29	26	4	145	146	62	NY Islanders	28	21	10	177	175	66
Vancouver	26	28	6	142	172	58	Philadelphia	28	25	7	155	183	63
Arizona	21	30	7	140	183	49	New Jersey	25	25	10	139	172	60
							Carolina	24	24	8	142	165	56

Note: Overtime losses (OTL) are worth one point in the standings and are not included in the loss column (L).

SOCCER

RANIERI WANTS MORE FROM CHAMPIONS LEAGUE 'HOLIDAY'

SEVILLE: Leicester City manager Claudio Ranieri believes his side can continue their "holiday" from the reality of a Premier League relegation battle in the Champions League after Jamie Vardy's away goal gave them a lifeline against Sevilla on Wednesday. Despite being thoroughly outplayed in southern Spain, Leicester emerged with just a 2-1 last 16, first leg defeat, leaving the tie finely balanced ahead of the return leg on March 14.

"The Champions League is like a holiday and the most important thing is the Premier League," said Ranieri, with Leicester perilously placed just one point above the drop zone.

"If we can do something important in the Champions League then great. "Football is great for this because the best and biggest team doesn't always win."

On top of Vardy's first goal since December, Leicester were thankful to a stunning display from goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel as he made a string of saves, including from Joaquin Correa's first-half penalty. However, he was powerless to stop Pablo Sarabia and Correa putting Sevilla into a 2-0 lead before Vardy's reply 17 minutes from time. "The first half was very, very tough," added Ranieri. "No one wanted to receive the ball and Kasper maintained the team alive, saved the penalty, saved some shots."

"The second-half was much better, but in our good moment they scored the second goal. "We didn't give up and scored the goal which is important for three things. "It gives us strength, it gets Vardy back among the goals and it opens up the tie."

However, the Italian laughed off suggestions Leicester could now be favourites to eliminate a Sevilla side that are flying high in La Liga and have won the Europa League in each of the past three seasons. "I think we are underdogs because they are very high quality. "We will suffer in the second leg, we will try to do our best and, if we lose, it is because Sevilla make a great performance." By contrast, Sevilla were left to rue a slew of missed chances. "We were the better side, we had a lot of chances and we should have scored more because as it is the tie is still open," said forward Stefan Jovetic. And Sevilla boss Jorge Sampaoli claimed he never expected the gulf between the sides to be so great despite Leicester's struggles of late. "It is difficult to imagine such a big difference in a Champions League game," said the Argentine.

"We were dominant and we found Schmeichel in great form. If it wasn't for him, it would have been a very different story."

Yet, despite their fine form, it was a similar story for Sevilla this season as their profligacy in front of goal could come back to haunt them in three weeks' time.

"We didn't have the luck or the ruthlessness to show the difference between the sides," added Sampaoli. "We go away with a strange sensation due to their goal, but we are looking forward to the second leg and motivated to stay in Europe." — AFP

SOCCER

MCMENEMY BACKS SAINTS TO TRIM IBRAHIMOVIC DOWN TO SIZE

LONDON: Despite harbouring some reservations about his hairstyle, Lawrie McMenemy knows Zlatan Ibrahimovic is the man his old club Southampton must stop in Sunday's League Cup final against Manchester United.

As Southampton manager, McMenemy led the south-coast club to their greatest success when they produced a huge upset to beat United 1-0 in the 1976 FA Cup final.

Forty-one years on, they are back at Wembley this weekend and McMenemy says the pony-tailed Ibrahimovic, 24 goals and counting in his maiden United season, could prove the difference.

"I'm not sure about his haircut. If you were a centre-half, you'd want to sneak a pair of scissors on. Maybe that could weaken him!" he told AFP in a telephone interview from his home in Hampshire, southern England on Wednesday. "But he's proved to be a fantastic player and he looks like he's a character. He will lap it up, the big stage. You've got to watch him.

"If he can go to Wembley and be the match-winner, he'll never be forgotten.

But nor will ours, as Bobby Stokes proved. "You haven't got to be a legend to start with. Little Bobby wasn't, but he certainly has been ever since." Stokes, who died of bronchial pneumonia aged 44, was the hero of Saints' shock win over United in 1976, scoring their 83rd-minute winner with a left-foot shot from Jim McCalliog's lobbed pass.

Southampton had finished sixth in the old Second Division and, in McMenemy's words, "everybody expected us to get hammered". But after surviving an early onslaught from top-flight giants United, with young goalkeeper Ian Turner repelling everything Tommy Docherty's side threw at him, they prevailed through Stokes's goal.

McMenemy describes the time that elapsed between Stokes's shot skidding past United goalkeeper Alex Stepney and the final whistle as "the longest seven minutes of my life".

SHEARER AND BALE

Preparing for a celebratory night out at the Royal Garden Hotel in west London after the match, McMenemy received a congratulatory phone-call from tearful beaten manager Docherty. Less than a year later, United claimed revenge of sorts by beating Southampton in the fifth round of the FA Cup before going on to overcome Liverpool in the final.

Parading the cup around the pitch after the game, Docherty spotted McMenemy on Wembley's television gantry and raised the silver trophy in his direction. "It was as if to say, 'I've got it now!'" McMenemy recalls. Nothing, however, could tarnish the memory of the golden Wembley day the previous year and when Southampton paraded the cup on their return home, they were greeted by a crowd of over 250,000 people. "Clubs like Man United, Arsenal, Chelsea, Tottenham, they all expect to go to Wembley every few years," McMenemy says. "But at Southampton it was a terrific event. It's the only bit of silverware the club's ever won." —AFP

PREVIEW

EMERY'S PSG FACE MARSEILLE FIGHT

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain must win their Ligue 1 grudge match at resurgent Marseille with the club's Qatari owners demanding nothing less than the successful defence of their title.

Such are the demands at PSG that should they lose to their bitter southern rivals on Sunday and drop six points behind leaders Monaco it would be considered a crisis.

The four-time reigning champions also face pressure from Nice who host Montpellier in Friday's early match and could overtake PSG and pull level with leaders Monaco before their trips to Marseille and Guingamp respectively.

PSG and Nice both have 56 points from 26 games—three points behind leaders Monaco. A pale PSG drew 0-0 at home with lowly Toulouse last Sunday and bouncing back at Marseille, where new signings Patrice Evra and Dimitri Payet have now settled, will be a real test of their pedigree.

Away fans are barred for security reasons and a 65,000 famously raucous sell out crowd will be baying for their first league win over PSG since November 2009. Key PSG defender Serge Aurier said Sunday's slip was down to tiredness after thumping Barcelona 4-0 in the Champions League the Tuesday before.

"It's not easy to repeat that immediately afterwards. We will stay positive. Now we will start preparing for Sunday's match and keep picking up points," the Ivorian promised.

His defensive partner Marquinhos was equally assured for the Marseille match.

"Starting with Sunday's game, we will come back stronger," the Brazilian said. Spanish coach Unai Emery is in the Qatari good books after the crushing of the Catalan giant, but he knows the domestic title is also indispensable.

"We have to fully focus on Marseille, the most consistent team will win the league and we will keep working," said Emery, who has an injury free squad.

Free scoring table toppers Monaco take the long trip north to mid-table Guingamp with every hope of going six clear of PSG tomorrow, although they will have mixed feelings about their 5-3 defeat at Manchester City in their Champions League last-16 first-leg on Wednesday.

The last three league meetings between Monaco and Guingamp have all been high scoring too and produced 15 goals with a 3-2 win for Monaco squeezed between a 2-2 and 3-3 draw.

Fans will also be keen to get a fresh view of the 'New Thierry Henry' in the form of Monaco's 18-year-old striker Kylian Mbappe, who scored against City and has ten goals in his last 19 games. Mbappe, Falcao and Monaco's 76 league goals so far this season will be giving Guingamp nightmares.

Third-placed Nice host Montpellier without star striker Mario Balotelli, sent off for a third time this season last weekend for dissent to the referee. — AFP



Wayne Rooney

SOCCER

ROONEY'S AGENT IN CHINA FOR TRANSFER TALKS

LONDON: Wayne Rooney's agent Paul Stretford held talks in China yesterday amid mounting speculation over the Manchester United captain's future, British media said.

Rooney, 31, has been sidelined by manager Jose Mourinho heightening expectations he could leave United for the mega-rich Chinese Super League. Guangzhou Evergrande, Beijing Guoan, Jiangsu Suning and Tianjin Quanjian are said to be among those interested in United's all-time top scorer.

British media have reported that he could earn up to \$1 million a week, making him the world's best paid player. However it remains unlikely that any move would be complete before the transfer window shuts next Tuesday.

Rooney missed Wednesday's Europa League last-32 second leg in Saint-Etienne through injury, but dominated conversation in France.

Mourinho said that Rooney's future was in his own hands in comments at his pre-match press conference that only fuelled the speculation. "You'll have to ask him," Mourinho said. "You have to ask him.

"Of course I can't guarantee (he will be here). I can't guarantee that I'm here next week, how can I guarantee that a player is here next season? "What I can guarantee is that if Wayne one day leaves the club it is not because I want him to leave the club. That's the only thing I can guarantee.

"I would never push - or try to push - a legend of this club

to another destiny. "So you have to ask him if he sees himself staying in the club for the rest of his career or if he sees himself moving. "It is not a question for me because I am happy to have him." Pushed on whether it was possible Rooney could leave in the next week, Mourinho retorted: "You have to ask him, not me.

"I was very open with you in the answer. I don't want him to leave." Rooney's deal at Old Trafford runs until mid-2018, with United holding the option to extend it by a further year.

He is United's record goalscorer and has won five Premier League titles and a Champions League trophy since joining as an 18-year-old for £27m from Everton in 2004.

A return to boyhood club Everton and move to Major League Soccer could be other avenues for Rooney, but are unlikely to offer wages anywhere near that available in China.

Former United team-mate Carlos Tevez, ex-Chelsea midfielder Oscar and former Watford striker Odion Ighalo are among those to have recently made big-money moves to the Far East.

However, a switch to China could bring Rooney's England career to an abrupt end. The country's all-time top scorer has won 119 caps and is closing in on Peter Shilton's record of 125 appearances. Rooney has already announced plans to retire from international football after the next year's World Cup in Russia. — AFP

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RENSHAW REVIVE AUSTRALIA IN INDIA TEST